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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LET HER BUT BREATHE: CHANGING REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN PLAYS BY PRAIRIE WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS

BY

THERESA AGNEW ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Let her but breathe: Changing Representations of Women in Plays by Prairie Women Playwrights, submitted by Theresa Agnew in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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DATE April 18, 1994

ABSTRACT

In this study I respond to the dearth of prairie drama criticism by examining the changing representations of women in five plays by prairie women playwrights. After the introductory chapter, in which I set up the representational strategies I will be analyzing--images of entrapment, character interaction, dramatic structure--the chapters are organized around distinct movements in prairie theatre history: the amateur movement, the professional movement, and the fringe movement. In the second chapter, I compare representations of women in two plays by Gwen Pharis Ringwood, one of the most prominent prairie playwrights of the amateur period. The traditional representations of Ruth and Hester in Still Stands the House (1938) contrast sharply with the representations of Shelley, Jasmine, Alice, and Connie in The Lodge (1975), attesting to Ringwood's own growing awareness of women's roles in a patriarchal society. In the third chapter, I discuss the implications of disparate handlings of representational strategies in two memory plays from the professional movement. Sharon Pollock's Doc premiered at Theatre Calgary in 1984 and Joanna Glass's Play Memory, initially entitled The Last Chalice, premiered at Manitoba Theater Centre in 1977. While the themes and structures of the plays are similar, the women represented in each work are governed by each playwrights' view regarding the political function of theatre. In the last chapter, I discuss Maenad Theatre's play, Aphra (1991). As the only prairie theatre company with a particularly feminist mandate, Maenad employs various representational strategies in a manner that emphasizes the company's political concerns, hinting at a new direction for women's theatre on the prairies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the introduction to NeWest Plays By Women (1987), Diane Bessai states, "The editorial decision to make the seventh volume of the NeWest Play Series an anthology of plays by women (the first regional collection of its kind) is a natural reflection of the increasing prominence of women playwrights in the Canadian theatre of the 1980's" (vii). To theatre artists struggling to achieve a more persistent female presence in Canadian theatre, her words offer long-awaited confirmation that their struggles have not been in vain. Yet it would be rash to assume that an increasing number of women playwrights wields the strength to defeat singlehandedly male dominance in a 2000 year old tradition; unfortunately, one of the allies these women seek to sustain their work--the theatre critic--is frustratingly absent. Two years prior to publication of the NeWest anthology, Bessai called attention to the dearth of prairie drama criticism claiming, "[L]iterary criticism has yet to pay much heed to the drama's potential place in the prairie canon . . . [and so] it still exists in critical isolation" ("Modern" 107). Saskatchewan playwrights Dianne Warren and Barbara Sapergia associate the existence of substandard productions with this lack of criticism:

> Warren: Really mediocre theatre can exist because nobody criticizes it for what it is. There's no room for objectivity--the reviewer says I like this, I don't like this, on an entirely subjective basis.
>
> Sapergia: It would be useful to have a thorough, informed

> critic who has spent years learning about the theatre and thinking about it, who could make a profound analysis of the play which looks at the work seriously and relates it to the theatre in Canada and elsewhere. (27)

Margaret Hollingsworth contextualizes Warren and Sapergia's concerns in terms of women's drama. She contends, "Women's voices need to be produced clearly and boldly and it would help if there were more female critics to act as intermediaries, critics who could bring a rigorous critical judgement to the work, and who did not feel . . . that they needed to be constantly supportive" (Collaborators 19). Rose Scollard, the primary playwright for Maenad Theatre Productions in Calgary from 1988-1991, substantiates Hollingsworth's claims. She recalls her reaction to the reviews of her first production, Uneasy Pieces [1]:

> I really got vicious reviews on that [Uneasy Pieces]! It was my first play and I *saw* the reviewers sitting in an audience where everybody was laughing hysterically for two hours and yet I was . . . chopped. Diane [Bessai] reviewed it a couple of months later in NeWest. It wasn't entirely favorable, but it was a very constructive review and she treated me as a writer. She treated all my themes as serious themes. It made me feel that I actually existed, that someone was listening to what I was saying. Usually the NeWest or Theatrum reviews, whether good or bad, provide criticism as I see it. They are not tossed off 20 minutes after seeing the play. (Personal interview)

Enthusiastically responding to these persistent demands for serious critical assessment of prairie drama, I initially decided to confront "critical isolation" by spurring an interest in as many prairie plays and playwrights as possible. In the first draft of my M.A. proposal, I outlined a discussion of approximately nine playwrights and fifteen plays.[2] I felt this type of survey criticism would successfully draw attention to the "many" rather than the "few"; but as I began my research on Gwen Pharis Ringwood's Still Stands The House, I realized that the careful analysis of female representations that I wanted to undertake would be most effective if applied to only a handful of works. And so, I began the painstaking process of selection.

In the first chapter of my study, I had originally planned to select plays from the works of Gwen Pharis Ringwood *and* Elsie Park Gowan, two of the most prominent prairie playwrights of the amateur period. In many ways, Gowan's women, who "tend to be feisty, strong-willed, and articulate individuals," held an appeal that Ringwood's early female characters--"gentle, accepting [and] passive"--did not (Day Elsie 17). For example, in Gowan's The Hungry Spirit (1938), Marian Gale is a young woman whose thirst for knowledge and personal fulfilment contribute to a startlingly (for its time) unorthodox representation. Ignoring conventional perceptions of women, Gowan creates a young woman who struggles toward self-definition despite the limitations of domesticity. When Marian's plans to attend university are threatened by her family's insistence that she sacrifice her savings in order to help her brother Rob and his pregnant girlfriend, she recognizes the gender-bias that works to undermine her goals and refuses to change her plans. She tells her mother,

> If I were a man there isn't anything on heaven or earth you wouldn't do to push me on. But because I'm a girl, you'd sacrifice me, all my plans, all my lovely dreams, so that Rob can go up the alley and get away with it. . . . Let me get away for a while and look for my own kind of life . . . a life of the mind and the spirit. (97)

Marian's independence is a trait shared by many of Gowan's female characters, but it is a trait that is only hinted at in Ringwood's early plays. As Ringwood's friend and colleague, Gowan "tried to change Gwen Pharis's very traditional ideas on women" (Anthony 32)[3], but it was not until much later in her career that Ringwood was able to incorporate Gowan's vision with her own. Geraldine Anthony notes,

> The women in Still Stands the House, Pasque Flower, Dark Harvest, The Rainmaker, Stampede, and several other early dramas play the traditional roles of housewife and mother. Only in the plays written in the 1960s and 1970s do they break away from these roles to maintain their independence as professional career women. (32)

By concentrating solely on Ringwood's work, I felt I would be able to focus on her "breaking away." Her work reflects one woman's growing awareness of women's position in a patriarchal society in a way that Gowan's consistently liberal feminist representations cannot. The ways that Ringwood adapts representational strategies to advance her increasingly political attitudes regarding women become apparent in a comparison of Ruth and Hester in one of her earliest plays, Still Stands the House (1938), with Alice, Connie, Shelley, and Jasmine, in one of her later works, The Lodge (1975).

In Chapter Two, I had originally proposed a two-part examination of plays by women in the professional theatre, focusing on Sharon Pollock and Joanna Glass as "first generation" professional prairie playwrights produced by large (and for the most part, conservative) regional theatres and Wendy Lill, Sharon Stearns, Kelly Rebar, and Dianne Warren as contemporary playwrights associated with the "alternative" professional theatre. The alternative movement, with its emphasis on revolutionary social and political ideology (Usmiani 2), welcomed the feminist concerns addressed in plays such as Wendy Lill's Fighting Days, a drama that bravely challenges the legendary status of revered prairie suffragette Nellie McClung, and Sharon Stearns' Hooking for Paradise, with its social-political commentary on prostitution on the prairies. Here, I chose to retain the section on early professional theatre, believing Maenad Theatre Productions in Chapter Three, as a specifically feminist offshoot of the alternative movement, encompassed and intensified the feminist representations of women that characterized Lill, Stearns, Rebar, and Warren's work.

The thematic and structural similarities in Sharon Pollock's Doc and Joanna Glass' Play Memory, which prompted Jerry Wasserman to refer to Doc as Play Memory's "closest Canadian relative" (63), also prompted my examination and comparison of representations of women in the two plays. Both are admittedly autobiographical works, and in this capacity respond to the 1960's feminist slogan which advocates "the personal is political." I found the "personal" that these plays depict--the horrible realities of family neglect and family violence--brought into sharp focus the disturbing irony of writing critically and objectively about circumstances that demand sympathy and sensitivity. I hope, but am not convinced, that I was able to achieve a balance between these two perspectives.

Chapter Three has changed the least since my original proposal. Although I had initially hoped to discuss some of Rose Scollard's independently scripted works (especially Tango Noir/Bete

Blanche), Aphra, with its intentionally feminist representations of women, was to be the focal point of the chapter from the onset. Maenad's re-visioning of Aphra Behn fulfils Janet Brown's contention that "every feminist action is devoted to the recognition and restoration of women who have been silenced and forgotten by the patriarchy" (11), but the play goes beyond reclamation to assert its audience's political responsibility to change the structures that shape women's lives. The collective scripting of the play, its complex and unconventional dramatic structure, and the ironic twists and transformations that dominate the action all work to remind the spectator of his or *her* particular role in perpetuating patriarchal notions of women *outside* the theatre space.

With the scope of my study narrowed to five plays (Still Stands the House (1938), The Lodge (1975), Doc (1984), Play Memory (1983), and Aphra (1990)), I began to consider the representational strategies that contributed to each playwright's particular vision of women. Prompted by the disparate dramatic structures of the plays, and encouraged by the insistence of numerous critics that innovative dramatic form is necessary to upend conventional representations of women[4], I decided to examine the contributions of dramatic structure to female representation. Key to my examination is an attempt to explore *how* a play (or playwright) addresses *representational* concerns by defying traditional (and therefore patriarchal) expectations of "appropriate" *structural* conventions. Some of the questions about the connections between representation and structure that I want to explore are How does Still Stands the House, with its emphasis on the realist conventions of folk drama, succeed in foreshadowing the feminist drama of the 1960's? How are the representations of Ruth and Hester affected when Ringwood deviates from the conventions of folk drama? How do the temporal shifts that defy traditional expectations of linear narrative structure contribute to representations of Ruth and Jean in Play Memory, Katherine and Bob in Doc or Aphra, Mary and Betty in Aphra?

While dramatic structure organizes the physical stage space within which female (and male) roles develop, character interactions impart the psychological and emotional aspects of representation. In my analysis, I focus primarily on how character interaction advances, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the feminist notions of autonomy and female friendship. Predictably the women in the five plays possess varying degrees of self-awareness, but perhaps less predictable is the rather curious link between self-awareness and female friendship that emerges. Ruth and Hester in Still Stands the House, Alice in The Lodge, and Ruth in Play Memory are represented as women who are unaware of the oppressive patriarchal forces that shape their lives; they are also women who are either unwilling or unable to develop friendships with other women. Shelley and Jasmine (The Lodge) and Aphra and Betty (Aphra), on the other hand, are women whose words and actions defy patriarchal expectations of women and who benefit from close female friendships.

As I explored the ways that dramatic structure and character interaction contributed to representations of women in the plays, I found myself intrigued by the persistent use of entrapment imagery as a means of emphasizing the female characters' struggles against patriarchal expectation. Entrapment is an oft-used image that creates an effective but, in most instances, rather obvious connection between oppressor and oppressed. In these plays, however, innovative dramatic form works to magnify and intensify the images of entrapment. Fragmented narratives, unexpected transformations, swirling memories, stark sets, and temporal shifts restrict the characters' movements on stage; in a sense, the theatre space itself becomes a part of the trap the women strive to escape. In Ringwood's plays, which are reliant on more conventional structures, entrapment manifests itself in symbolic (The Lodge) and metaphoric (Still) manipulations of the environment.

Despite the diverse personal and political intents that shape each of the plays in this study, a sense of women's timeless struggle to overcome (or fulfil) patriarchal expectations pervades each script. Ruth and Hester Warren (Still), Ruth MacMillan (Play Memory), Alice Daravalley (The Lodge) and Mary Betterton (Aphra) struggle no less diligently to satisfy patriarchal expectations than do Connie and Shelley (The Lodge), Bob and Katherine (Doc) and Jean (Play Memory) to escape them. In 1952, Simone de Beauvoir captured the frustrating reality of this struggle stating, "Let her [woman] but think, dream, sleep, desire, breathe without permission and she betrays the masculine ideal" (474). The challenge implicit in her words has been taken up by women such as Aphra Behn and Jasmine Daravalley (The Lodge) who refuse to acquiesce to patriarchal demands. Like the women playwrights who create (or reclaim) them, they refuse to seek permission.

Chapter 2

Representations of Women in Gwen Ringwood's Still Stands The House and The Lodge

To look at representations of women in Canadian "prairie" theatre prior to the "Golden Age of amateurism" is, for the most part, to look at representations of women in the most popular American or British productions of the early twentieth-century. For while the travelling professional theatre companies that extended their regular circuits to include the Western provinces in the 1900's offered prairie audiences the opportunity to watch a variety of well-rehearsed productions with experienced casts, they did not vary their repertoire from the proven successes produced back home in England or the United States. Consequently, popular musicals, vaudeville shows, and "packaged versions of recent New York or London successes" (Stuart 54), along with the traditional representations of women associated with conservative professional theatre, dominated the budding prairie theatre scene. Initially, travelling companies were greeted enthusiastically by prairie pioneers hungry for entertainment, and profit-driven troupes, drawn to the "breadbasket circuit" by the promise of guaranteed bookings, flourished. Betty Lee remarks,

> Canadians, the foreign professionals had discovered, were eager to see their shows. New theatres were being built throughout the country and big money was to be made in a land which had little indigenous theatre of its own. The word spread fast in the American states, in France and in Britain, and as the nineteenth century waned, the great theatrical safari into Canada had begun. (57)

In spite of its early triumphs, however, the decline of "the road" followed quickly on the heels of its success.[5] Enthusiastic amateurs dedicated to the development of community theatre replaced the travelling professionals, heralding a new era in Canadian theatre. But even though a grass roots commitment to "drive out the foreign 'money changers' from the theatre and build one from native talent" (Day 11) was key to the movement, indigenous writing could not be encouraged or undertaken until the new theatre practitioners understood fundamental performance, management, and direction principles. As a result, familiar plays with familiar representations of British and American heroines continued to typify "prairie" theatre until the movement had gained the strength to nourish its own writers. In Alberta, Elizabeth Sterling Haynes became the first (and most influential) figure to help communities unravel the mysteries of play production; and as amateur theatre gained a surer footing in the prairies, she encouraged the creation of indigenous plays through playwriting programs offered at the Banff School of Fine Arts.

Haynes arrived in Edmonton in 1922, making her debut on the Alberta drama scene with the campus dramatic society at the University of Alberta (Day 13). For the next decade, she acted, directed, and taught drama both at the University and within the larger community, never abandoning her commitment to encourage "native talent." In 1933, supported by a three year grant from the Carnegie Foundation to the Department of Extension at the University of Alberta, Haynes extended her commitment to grass roots theatre beyond the Edmonton community. The grant "provide[d] for a full time drama instructor who would give direction to drama groups throughout Alberta and who could help teachers establish drama programs" (Day 15). With an itinerary that would have daunted the most active of the touring companies in the previous decade, Haynes, accompanied by her part-time secretary Gwen Pharis Ringwood, began her visits to Alberta communities, laying the groundwork for a thriving community theatre network. Ringwood attributes the creation of "Prairie Theatre" to her mentor:

> [I]n the late twenties Elizabeth Sterling Haynes started a new kind of play production. Before Elizabeth was through, Western Canada had a loosely knit federation of amateur theatre groups under Dominion Drama Festival sponsorship; it also had the Banff School of Fine Arts; and everywhere in little theatre, high schools, universities, people were learning the techniques of acting and directing and were staging productions of great plays, old and new. Elizabeth Haynes had founded and was nurturing the Prairie Theatre. (Stage Voices 91-92)

Unfortunately, the writers of the "new" plays that Ringwood refers to were provided with little incentive to develop their craft. Amateur theatre groups, who often linked their own success with the staging of plays that had been successful in London or New York (Lee 288), tended to dismiss plays written by the handful of determined prairie playwrights who were beginning to challenge the relevancy of British and American drama for prairie audiences.[6] Nonetheless, slow progress was made in the development of regional prairie theatre. Gwen Pharis Ringwood, along with the other early regional playwrights, courageously asserted the importance of prairie people, events, and landscapes in the creation of indigenous prairie theatre. Her experiences with Haynes, her formal training with Professor Frederick Koch at the University of North Carolina, and her life as a child growing up on the prairies all contributed to the creation of regional plays that grew "directly from her intimate feeling for her native southern Alberta landscape" (Anthony, Gwen 38).

****

Gwen Pharis Ringwood, under the auspices of Elizabeth Sterling Haynes and the University of Alberta, was given the opportunity to continue the explorations of landscape and language that had been a significant part of her childhood. As a young girl growing up in rural Alberta, she daily explored the countryside as she would a playground and read books with a zeal she recalls with wonder: "In the years of my growing up . . . [I] think perhaps I was much influenced by reading. I loved language. . . . The feel of words and sounds in my mouth, the rhythms of great speeches, the swell of blank verse all seemed important to me" (Stage Voices 91). In her work with Haynes, her explorations became more extensive and purposeful, inspiring Ringwood to put her knowledge of the prairie environment and prairie people to the theatrical test.

Ringwood's creation of *prairie* plays based on *prairie* experiences followed the principles of playwriting espoused by Professor Frederick Koch, founder of the Carolina Playmakers at the University of North Carolina. Attracted by his ideas, Haynes hired

Koch to teach a summer course in playwriting at the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1936. Ringwood attended and Koch was so impressed by her early achievements that he encouraged her to pursue training at Chapel Hill. The following year she received a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to attend the University of North Carolina and work as a student with Koch in the Department of Dramatic Art. Under his tutelage Ringwood was encouraged to focus her writing on the prairie environment and the experiences and observations that had created her personal culture. Koch wanted his students to react against the "outlived formulas" of conventional theatre and he encouraged them to find a fresh, more relevant means of expression in folk plays. He explains,

> The term 'folk' as we use it . . . is concerned with folk subject matter: with the legends, superstitions, customs, environmental differences, and the vernacular of the common people. For the most part they are realistic and human; sometimes they are imaginative and poetic. . . . The term 'folk' with us applies to that form of drama which is earth-rooted in the life of our common humanity. ("Drama" 10-11)

The foregrounding of "the common people" advocated by Koch's brand of folk drama challenges the authority of traditional scripts that ignore the lives of prairie farmers, small town merchants, or regional heroes. However, as a *female* playwright adhering to the conventions of folk philosophy, Ringwood's plays take Koch's challenge one step further by asserting the importance of *female* characters concerned with the particular affairs of prairie *women*.

Ringwood's women dominate the stage throughout the four and a half decades of her writing career, but the *way* in which they dominate changes markedly between her first play, The Dragons of

Kent (1936) and her last The Garage Sale (1981). In her early work, female characters are unable--other than by their persistent presence on stage--to exceed the confines of traditional representation[7]. But in the shift from her early prairie tragedies to her later plays of "social protest," the shackles of conventional representation begin to loosen, revealing Ringwood's growing awareness of what it means to be a woman (and later an elderly woman) in a patriarchal society. Ringwood's increasingly feminist representations become apparent in an examination of the different ways that character interaction, images of entrapment, and dramatic structure contribute to female representation in Still Stands The House (1938) and The Lodge (1975).

****

Still Stands The House, written and first produced in 1938 and remounted at Ringwood's M.A. commencement in 1939, remains her most popular one-act play.[8] It is a drama rooted in the domestic conflicts and prairie experiences of Hester Warren and her sister-in-law, Ruth. Ruth has recently married Bruce, Hester's younger brother, but she is unhappy with her life in the country. The Warren farmstead, which had prospered under the watchful pioneer eye and hard labour of the now-deceased Martin Warren, is suffering, despite his son's equally diligent care, from the ravages of severe summer droughts and harsh winter storms. Bruce's hopes and Hester's sanity, along with the land itself, are slowly being eroded. Ruth believes some control can be wrested from the natural forces if they leave the homestead for an irrigated farm closer to town. She yearns for a more vibrant environment for her soon-to-be-born child and encourages her husband to make this change. Bruce's decision is made difficult by a lifetime of ties to the farm and by Hester's insistence that they remain. Conflicts arise as Ruth, Hester, and Bruce struggle to have their needs met. In the end, Hester's deliberate and frightening refusal to shelter Ruth and Bruce from the storm that batters the house results in their deaths and the implied triumph of the inhospitable land.

Although the climactic point of Still Stands the House turns on Bruce's decision to leave the farm, two women--Ruth and Hester--dominate the psychological and physical space of the play. Their persistent presence on stage challenges conventional dramatic expectations which typically assign women supporting roles (Brown 13), but because the representations of Ruth and Hester are organized around stereotypical assumptions regarding appropriate femininity, the successfulness of the challenge is limited. Ruth and Hester are women in opposition: their personalities conflict, their ideals conflict, and their attitudes toward life on a farm that is being beaten by winter storms and summer droughts conflict. Throughout the play, Ringwood forfeits the "individualizing detail" (Abrams 23) necessary to the development of complex representations by focusing solely on these conflicts; as a result, Ruth and Hester, in spite of the leading roles they play, reinforce rather than escape the confines of conventional representations of women.[9]

As Ruth and Hester interact on stage, the polar representations of Ruth as "hero" and Hester as "villain" are emphasized through Ringwood's deft handling of gesture, dialogue, and symbolic associations. However, the sympathy (or lack of sympathy) that each representation evokes is surreptitiously dependent upon stereotypical assumptions regarding women. Ruth the "hero" is really Ruth the "angel in the house." She embodies the patriarchal concept of ideal femininity that Virginia Woolf encourages women to recognize and destroy. According to Woolf, the "angel in the house" was

> intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. . . . She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it--in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (278)

Hester, on the other hand, refutes the "angelic" ideal that Ruth embodies. Unlike her sister-in-law, Hester is stubborn, aggressive, and self-centred. However, her refusal to accept one set of patriarchal expectations does not liberate Hester from stereotypical representation, for "[i]f the definition [of the Eternal Feminine] is contradicted by the behaviour of flesh and blood women, it is the latter who are wrong: we are told not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine" (de Beauvoir 253). And so, Hester is simply defined by a different, and equally debilitating, set of expectations. As Simone de Beauvoir explains, through a woman's "passivity she bestows peace and harmony--but if she declines this role, she is seen forthwith as an . . . ogress" (248).

By making Hester's obvious severity perverse and destructive, Ringwood conceals the dubiousness of Ruth's "angelic" traits. In the hyacinth scene, for example, dialogue and gesture enhance the "angel-ogress" polarity, but ignore the socially constructed ideals that contribute to the representations of both women:

> Ruth: Look Hester, how the hyacinths have bloomed. I could smell them when I came in the room just now.
> Hester: Hyacinths always seem like death to me.
> Ruth: (her voice is young and vibrant) Oh, no. They're birth, they're spring! They say in Greece you find them growing wild in April. (She takes an old Wedgewood bowl from the sideboard, preparing to set the pot of hyacinths in it.)
> Hester: (in a dry, unfriendly tone) I've asked you not to use that Wedgewood bowl. It was my grandmother's. I don't want it broken.
> Ruth: I'm sorry. I thought the hyacinths would look so pretty in it, but I'll use the plain one. . . . They're so sweet. I like to touch them.
> Hester: They'll freeze tonight I'm thinking. (31)

Later, when Ruth leaves the room, Hester's

> eyes fall on the plant on the table. Slowly she goes toward it, as if drawn by something she hated. She looks down at the lavender blooms for a moment. Then with a quick, angry gesture, she crushes one of the stalks. She turns away and is winding up her wool when Bruce and Ruth return. (35)

The limitations of Ruth's passive representation are eclipsed by Hester's heartless responses. Ruth's placating apology--her willingness to forego her own pleasure in order to appease Hester--does not spark misgivings about the role of patriarchy in oppressing female autonomy. On the contrary, the "intensely sympathetic," "immensely charming," and utterly unselfish" (Woolf 278) responses that characterize her relationship with Hester become the *reasons* for her appeal. The disparate representations imply that certain types of women--those who comply with socially constructed ideas of appropriate femininity--are "heroic," while other types of women--those who refute the same notions--are "villainous." By juxtaposing Ruth's submissiveness with Hester's more obviously cruel and spiteful character, Ringwood sets up Ruth's passivity as a positive trait.

In her relationship with Bruce, Ruth continues to reinforce the patriarchal perception of "passivity . . . [as] the essential characteristic of the 'feminine' woman" (de Beauvoir 280). In The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir notes that "To be feminine is to . . . repress spontaneity and replace it with . . . studied grace and charm . . ." (336). Although Ruth has not "repressed" her "spontaneity" entirely, she acknowledges that her enthusiasm is unacceptable because Bruce does not approve of it. She tells Hester, "I get too excited over things; I know it. Bruce tells me I sound affected when I say too much about the way I feel, the way I like people . . . or the sky in the evening" (33). Her admission that she "knows" she gets "too excited" reveals her acceptance of Bruce's verdict about a trait that is really one of her strengths; Ruth's zest for life is one of her most appealing qualities. In her acquiesence to Bruce's perception of how she *should* be, she risks sacrificing or suppressing her individuality, allowing herself to be defined by his (male) values rather than her own.

Bound by patriarchal expectations, Ruth is unable to assert the validity of her own feelings when she argues that the farm should be abandoned. Instead of voicing her resistance to life on the farm in terms of her own needs, she focuses on the needs of others. She tells Bruce that leaving the farm is a decision that must be made for *his* peace of mind and *Hester's* sanity, but she does not insist that the change is also necessary for herself. On the contrary, she neglects to include herself when maintaining a move is imperative. She tells Bruce, "You should get free of this house. It's not good for *you* to stay here. It's not good for *Hester* [emphasis mine]" (36). By neglecting to mention her own needs, Ruth assumes they are inconsequential to her argument. Even when Bruce finally concedes to Ruth's persuasion, she changes her mind because of the rift it causes in his relationship with his sister: "Bruce! Not that way! Not for me. If it's that way, I don't care enough" (39). If the decision is based on Ruth's needs, sadly she does not "care enough".

Despite interactions that consistently contribute to her stereotypical representation, Ruth, at times, hesitantly challenges the limitations of feminine passivity, reluctantly voicing the validity of her own needs. As the storm battering the house gains strength, so does Ruth; the softly resistant pleas that characterize her early interactions with Hester are replaced by assertions that, although followed by retractions or apologetic qualifications, reveal her discontent.[10] Late in the play she declares, "*I* am afraid" (38), "*I'm* not happy here" (39) and "*I've* hurt you. But *I'm* right about this. *I* know *I'm* right" (40) [all emphasis mine]. Although each declaration is immediately qualified by a remark that belies the importance of the "I"--"It's not for myself" (38); "What kind of life would our child have?" (39); Can't you see it's for all of us?" (40)--the prefacing of her remarks with reference to herself suggests she has not entirely sacrificed her feelings and ideas in order to appease her husband or her sister-in-law. She tentatively offers her discontent as a valid reason to consider leaving the homestead.

In her text Feminist Drama, Helene Keyssar argues that "transformation" is key to the definition of feminist representations, stating, a character's "impetus . . . [must be] towards recognition of others and a concomitant transformation of the self and the world" (xiv). Ruth does not yet associate her discontent with the patriarchal structures that shape her life and so cannot claim a "recognition of others," and her inability to change her own situation precludes any attempts at "transforming the world." Nonetheless she is a precursor to the feminist representations of women that Keyssar examines. Ruth's independence, revealed in a softly resistant voice, may be tenuous, but it does demonstrate consciousness of the circumstances that contribute to her inability to act. Along with other "strong but delicate" (28) female characters in Ringwood's early plays, she is not yet ready for "transformation," but she does foreshadow the changes that the women in Ringwood's later plays undergo.[11]

The link between lack of self-awareness and adherence to "angelic" notions of ideal femininity is not limited to the stereotype that governs Ruth's actions; for Hester, who initially seems unaffected by the social constructions that define Ruth's character, is even less prepared for "transformation" than her sister-in-law. From a feminist perspective, I found it initially tempting to see Hester as a more appealing character than Ruth because her assertiveness suggests she possesses a stronger sense of self. For instance, when Ruth tells Hester that women feel safer if a man is nearby, Hester's response indicates an independence that is absent from Ruth's submissive generalization:

> Ruth: I wish he'd come. It's strange how women feel safer when their men are near, close enough to touch, isn't it? No matter how strong you think you are.
> Hester: I can't say that I need any strength from Bruce, or could get it if I needed it. (33)

This self-confidence in Hester's response imparts is re-iterated in her aggressive insistence that the house should not be sold. Unlike Ruth, who apologetically qualifies her pleadings whenever she voices her own opinion, Hester is resolute in her belief that the homestead should not be sacrificed. She knows how she feels and she does not seek the approval of others to validate these feeling. She insists, "This house will not be sold. I won't allow it" (30). In each case, Hester exhibits a certainty that Ruth lacks; feminist "transformation" *seems* to have already taken place.

It soon becomes obvious, however, that Hester's tenacity is not a sign of female independence, but a symptom of her insanity, an insanity wrought by her particular experiences within the same patriarchal system that threatens Ruth's autonomy. As a child taking on the responsibilities of her deceased mother, Hester became a surrogate wife and mother governed by the same expectations that shape Ruth's life. Anxious to please her father--

her only companion on the isolated prairies--Hester willingly, albeit unknowingly, sacrificed her own needs to ensure her father's were met. She tells Ruth, "After Mother died I did it all . . . 'We'll have to lean on one another now, Daughter.' . . . Those were his words. . . And that's the way it was" (32). Her new responsibilities did not in themselves restrict the development of Hester's autonomy, but her inability to move beyond a past where her purpose was clearly defined by her father's expectations implies that Martin Warren's ambitions demanded the sacrifice of his daughter's individuality.

That Hester learned to equate her needs with her father's is most obvious in her sublimated sexuality. The puritanical influence of the devout Martin Warren (indicated by Hester's association of her father with his Bible) shapes Hester's perceptions of men and marriage. She refuses to marry, not because of a sense of female independence, but because she believes her duty lies with her father. She says, "I couldn't leave Bruce and Father here alone. My duty was here in the house. So I stayed" (34). Hester presents this decision as if it were her own, but clearly the sacrifice she makes is to please her father:

> (as if she were telling an often-recited story to a stranger) I stayed home when Mother died and kept house for my little brother and Father. (Her voice grows stronger.) I was very beautiful, they said. My hair fell to my knees and it was black as a furrow turned in spring. (Proudly.) I can have a husband any time I want, but my duty is here with Father. You see how it is. I can't leave him. . . . Father called me the wise virgin then. (41)

Her father's encouragement coerces Hester into self-sacrifice, denying her the physical and emotional pleasures of an intimate relationship. Wanting to please her father, she sublimates her own sexuality to the model of the wise virgin, and learns to equate sexuality with sinfulness. Hester tells Ruth, "I could have married, and married well if I'd had a mind to. . . . The young men used to ride here on Sunday, but I stopped that. I never saw a man I'd sleep beside, or let him touch me. And that's all they want" (34). The twisted view of female sexuality that Hester defends suggests the misogynist delineation of woman as virgin or whore. Because Ruth does not deny her sexuality, Hester accuses her:

> I know your kind. In the night you tempted him with your bright hair. . . . Your body anointed with jasmine for his pleasure. . . . Oh, I know what you are! You and women like you. You put a dream around him with your arms, a sinful dream. You lift your white face to every stranger like you offered him a cup to drink from. That's sin! That's lust after the forbidden fruit. (40)

In her discussion of Still Stands the House, Judith Hinchcliffe suggests Hester is represented as a woman who has simply "inherited the masculine strengths and attitudes of her father who made her an essential part of his life" (184), but I would argue that her insanity implies a more destructive imposition of her father's demands. Hester's needs become so closely aligned with her father's that his death leaves her with no appropriate basis of identity. Unable to free herself from his expectations, she essentially becomes the prairie patriarch her father once was and unleashes his patriarchal expectations on Ruth and Bruce. Her appearance, as well as her behaviour, suggest her metamorphosis into her father's likeness, a factor emphasized in the first two productions of Still Stands the House by the casting of a man, Floyd Childs, in the role of Hester (Anthony, Gwen 58)!

To heighten the differences between Ruth and Hester's characters, Ringwood makes their appearances contrast as sharply as their dispositions, but she continues to perpetuate patriarchal expectations of women by conflating goodness and femininity on the one hand and severity and unattractiveness on the other. Even before Hester appears on stage, the detailed description of her physical appearance foreshadows her role as villain. She is described as

> forty years old . . . tall, dark and unsmiling. The stern rigidity of her body, the bitter austerity of her mouth, and the almost arrogant dignity of her carriage seem to make her a part of the room she enters. There is bitter resentment in her dark eyes as she confronts Ruth . . . . She holds a leather bound Bible close to her breast. (29)

Ruth, on the other hand, is

> small, fair-haired, and pretty, twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. There is more strength in her than her rather delicate appearance would indicate. She wears a soft blue house-dress, with a light wool cardigan over it. (28)

Petite, youthful, and attractive, Ruth's appearance immediately engages audience sympathy. Both characters are trapped by assumptions regarding appropriate and inappropriate images of women.

Ringwood's precise descriptions of the prairie landscape, revealed in stage directions and dialogue, enhance the representations of Ruth and Hester as "trapped" women. Although Ringwood's female characters in the late 1930's were not intentionally political creations, contemporary feminist analysis readily extends the powerful metaphor of Ruth's entrapment by the prairie landscape to include her relationship with the patriarchy. Despite its vast, open spaces, the prairie is a trap from which Ruth struggles to escape. Henry Kreisel argues that the prairie "often produces an extraordinary sensation of confinement within a vast and seemingly unlimited space" (Kreisel 259). In Still Stands the House, Ringwood effectively dramatizes Kreisel's theory, creating a stage metaphor in which the landscape becomes Ruth's jailer, the house her prison. The relentlessness of the prairie storm that batters the house is felt in "The icy wind of a northern blizzard [that] sweeps across the prairie, lashes about the old Warren farmhouse, and howls insistently at the door and windows" (27). Ruth is trapped in the house by the storm, and her description of the winds attest to her captor's cruelty. She says to Hester, "The wind swirls and shrieks and raises such queer echoes in this old house! It seems to laugh at us in here, thinking we're safe, hugging the stove! As if it knew it could blow out the light and the fire and . . ." (31). The landscape confines her to a household that is equally cruel. Ruth accuses Bruce and Hester of creating the trap she is confined to:

> You two and your father lived so long in this dark house that you forgot there's a world beating outside, forgot that people laugh and play sometimes. . . .[A]s it is, I might as well not be a person. You'd like a shadow better that wouldn't touch your house. A child would die here. A child can't live with shadows. (39)

Martin Warren's description of the blowing snow as "a moving shroud, a winding sheet that the wind lifts and raises and lets fall again" (32) supports Ruth's association of her environment with death and entrapment. Her efforts to transform the harshness of the storm and the starkness of the house with hyacinths and chintz are thwarted by Hester's insistence that the homestead remain unchanged. If Ruth can escape the confines of her trap she believes hope, growth and new life will replace the "shadows" that surround her. But she is defenceless against her captor, the prairie forces are manifest in a storm that "shriek[s] about the chimney corner, knock[s] at the door and rattle[s] the windows in a wild attempt to force an entrance" (27).

While the link between the prairie landscape and patriarchy is easily assumed, Ringwood's adherence to and deviations from Koch's aesthetic of regional theatre in the late 1930s faintly foreshadow the politically motivated women's theatre of the 1960s. Koch bases his definition of folk drama on two key assumptions. He believes, "the ultimate cause of all dramatic action we classify as 'folk,' whether it be physical or spiritual, may be found in man's desperate struggle for existence" ("Drama" 10) and he emphasizes the ability of realistic dramatic form to convey authentic depictions of particular people, situations, and environments.

In Ringwood's Still Stands the House, the emphasis on naturalistic determinism, apparent in the uncontrollable will of the prairie storms and the patriarchally-driven Hester, reinforces the women's experiences of oppression rather than liberation. Ringwood explains the folk dramatist's concept of realism as "a method to communicate what at the moment seems to us true, real; we set about . . . carefully selecting those details, people, incidents, and actions which will seem faithful to the human condition we are trying to present" ("Realism" 1). In Still Stands the House, then, Ringwood's "careful selection" of Ruth and Hester, two *women* struggling with the harshness and loneliness of prairie life, "communicates" Ringwood's "truth" and consequently challenges the authenticity of conventional drama that excludes or marginalizes female perspectives. By having female characters dominate the stage, Ringwood simultaneously takes a first step toward more complex representations of women and preserves one woman's story about life on the prairies during the depression. That the "truth" Ringwood perceives reveals itself in stereotypical images of women may give credence to Margaret Laurence's assessment of Ringwood's situation: "[F]or Gwen Pharis Ringwood, it must have been initially difficult--as it was for all women writers at that time--to portray women as she *knew* they were, not as they had been presented by generations of male writers" (xii). But it also provides an authentic picture of the oppression that shaped the experiences of many prairie women.

Despite an emphasis on the realistic conventions of mainstream theatre, folk drama undermines the established theatres' claims of universality by asserting the importance of the "common folk's" stories. This assertion is essentially political because it "tacitly reject[s] the cosmopolitan aspirations that were the dominant sign of success in the theatre" (Bessai 110). In Ringwood's plays, the larger and supposedly more universal situations of "successful" theatre are replaced with a smaller, prairie woman's world. But even though Ringwood succeeds in creating relevant, powerful theatre while re-defining conventional notions of the universal, conservative critics deny the validity of regionalist theatre: "[It] seems to be, in the minds of some drama critics, a pejorative term. For them it seems to denote narrowness, a failure to deal with the larger world around us, an inability to reach the universal experience in drama" (Anthony, "Appraisal" 132). And yet, Still Stands the House proves how the strength of a regional play lies in its ability to "deal with the larger world" while remaining rooted in a situation so particular that it challenges conventional notions of the universal. The struggle between man and nature, the time-tested images of good and evil that enhance Ruth and Hester's representations, the association of the hyacinth with life and re-birth are all universal notions that allow for a "more general appeal than just prairie folk" (Anthony Gwen Preface). But the play's power lies in its ability to touch "prairie folk." In her apprenticeship with Koch, Ringwood was taught to dramatize her own experiences and observations; her plays are *meant* to be more relevant to people who are familiar with prairie life. Her refusal to be influenced by popular expectations of the universal contributes to regional theatre as a theatre of non-conformity, again foreshadowing the direction that feminist theatre took a few decades later. Diane Bessai acknowledges the ability of prairie theatre to achieve the universal without detracting from its particular suitability for prairie audiences:

> That the [prairie] drama may--and occasionally does--go beyond the specific life of that region, that its interests are ultimately universal rather than particular, is but to say (with Mavor Moore) that Canadian drama should first be addressed to 'whom it may concern'; regional interests, addressed to regional audiences, are a primary step in that direction (Bessai 115).

Although Ringwood's early drama, for the most part, adheres to Koch's principles of folk drama, she did choose to confront the limitations realism places on language. The "high flown oratorical free verse" and "grandiose language" (Laurence xii) that typify her prairie characters' speech is not intended to challenge the constraints of patriarchal theatre; nonetheless, Ringwood's refusal to use realistic language challenges the conservativism of mainstream theatre. She explains the writing process that determined her early regional endeavors:

> I confronted then and have confronted many times since one of the constraints of realism which can hold the writer enchained . . . the limitations of rational language. . . . My plays at Chapel Hill and often since then were usually drafted by hand in a kind of blank verse or free verse, and then went through a process I called 'prosing down,' discarding or concealing obvious metre, retaining images that seem true or evocative, getting rid of purple passages but keeping or finding some distillation of expression that comes with intense feeling. ("Realism" 7)

In Still Stands the House, Ruth and Hester's "evocative" and poetic descriptions of the storm enhance the destructive qualities of the prairie winter and Hester's haunting perceptions of female sexuality find their strength in manipulations of Biblical verse. Ringwood's decision to forego "rational language" in favor of heightened poetic descriptions parallels the decision of The Living

Theatre Company, one of the earliest feminist theatres in the United States "to create a theatre supportive of poetic drama, a theatre that encouraged poets to write plays and that rejected the living room realism of most mainstream [male-dominated] theatre" (Keyssar 9). Ringwood's intent is less political, but in her decision to "confront the constraints of realism" she confronts the patriarchal expectation of mainstream theatre.

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Almost four decades after the first production of Still Stands the House, The Lodge (1975) had its premiere performance in William's Lake, British Columbia. Remaining true to the realist conventions of regional theatre, Ringwood focused on "the eventful happenings in h[er] own life, the characters in h[er] own neighborhood" (Koch, "Our" 39) by setting the play in the British Columbia wilderness (Ringwood moved to William's Lake in 1953) and by focusing on an elderly woman's changing relationship with her family. The play introduces the audience to three generations of Daravalley women who struggle to understand themselves and one another as they gather in celebration of Grandma Daravalley's birthday. Jasmine Daravalley invites her children and grandchildren to meet at the lodge that her granddaughter, Shelley, has recently purchased with her husband, Allan. Shelley's mother, Alice, and her Aunt Connie arrive with their husbands; but rather than anticipate the birthday celebration with delight, they selfishly plot to place

Jasmine in a senior's home in order to secure her financial and material effects for themselves.

While Ringwood refers to The Lodge as a "comedy about greed" ("Realism" 14), it is also a play that acknowledges and jars female stereotypes. In Alice and Connie, for example, Ringwood continues to represent women who, like Ruth and Hester, are trapped by the almost impenetrable bonds of patriarchal ideology. But rather than abandon these women to the seemingly indestructible will of the patriarchy, she juxtaposes their situations with the situations of Jasmine and Shelley--independent women who understand and support one another's attempts to reject societal expectations that dictate their roles as elderly woman and young wife, respectively. No longer content with the simplicity that polar representations yield, however, Ringwood addresses the complex forces influencing each woman's situation. As the characters interact, images of entrapment emphasize their varying degrees of self-awareness. The environment does not become a stage metaphor for entrapment as it does in Still Stands the House, but the symbolic linking of the natural freedom of the wilderness with the liberty that Connie, Jasmine, and Shelley seek reflects each woman's consciousness of the societal forces that work to "entrap" them.

Like Hester and Ruth in Still Stands the House, Alice is a woman who reinforces stereotypical images of women; but unlike her prairie counterparts, Alice's interactions with her daughter, sister, and mother expose the inadequacies inherent in a system that purposefully denies female autonomy. In her relationship with

Shelley, Alice's patriarchal indoctrination is revealed in her inability to fathom or accept her daughter's independence. Alice condemns Shelley's decision to operate a wilderness lodge not because her daughter is unhappy with her circumstances, but because the responsibilities she assumes do not conform to conventional expectations. Ignoring Shelley's explanation that she "love[s] being outside a lot. Hearing that cougar--the loons. Picking berries" (443), Alice confides in her husband, "I hate this place. . . . I've decided . . . [w]e're going to get Allan and Shelley out of here" (438). She dismisses Shelley's feelings as irrelevant, conflates her daughter's happiness with her own, and, as a result, illustrates the complicity of women in gender oppression.

As a self-aware and strong-willed woman, Shelley is impervious to her mother's conservative demands; but for Connie, who is just becoming aware of her position within the patriarchy, Alice's complicity impedes transformation. Connie is beginning to recognize that her needs, desires, and ideas are being ignored or invalidated by her husband, Roland. As Connie struggles to assert her independence within her marriage, however, Alice criticizes rather than encourages her sister's resistance to patriarchal expectations. For instance, when Connie looks outside her marriage for fulfilment and becomes dedicated to bird watching, Alice dismisses her enthusiasm for her new hobby: "Dear Connie. I don't think she cares a cent about bird watching. It's just a pose" (443). Once again unable to fathom or accept an attitude that does not comply with the traditional expectations that she defines herself by, Alice rejects Connie's feelings as impossible and invalid. Alice's "mean" response is not prompted solely by Connie's chosen hobby, however, but by her awareness (conscious or subconscious) that Connie is somehow refusing the tenets that should shape a "good wife's" actions (472). By choosing a hobby that embraces a philosophy contrary to her husband's ethic of environmental consumerism, Connie displays a willingness to challenge his authority and assert her independence--a willingness that makes Alice uneasy. Alice believes Connie would be happier in her marriage if she would only relinquish her independence, accept her role as wife, and remember "to think of Roland. Your first duty is to him" (478).

For Connie, who has recognized the injustice in a system that denies female autonomy, Alice's advice that she consider Roland her "first duty" is irrelevant and impossible, but to claim an alternative, more authentic identity proves difficult. Connie's interactions with Roland contribute to her representation as a woman struggling to transform the oppressive structures that she once accepted but now rejects. Courageously Connie begins to resist Roland's traditional definition of their relationship, which demands her passivity and accepted dependency, by assuming a more active role in her marriage. At first, she searches for fulfilment through shared interests, hoping to "transform" Roland as well as herself:

> Connie: I gave him a camera. I told him about whales. I bought a record of The Ancient Mariner. I tried to get him to read Jonathan Livingston Seagull, but he wouldn't.
> Alice: Roland likes bridge. You wouldn't learn to play.

Connie: I tried, but he said I refused his demands. (450)

Her endeavors, however, are met with close-minded indifference, for although Connie sees a need for change, Roland does not. He is unwilling to relinquish his authoritative position within their marriage and, like Alice, denies the validity of Connie's discontent because he cannot comprehend the idea of female autonomy.

Because Roland is content with his marriage as it is (after all Connie, up to this point, has assumed her "duties" responsibly), he continues to recognize Connie not for who *she is* but for who *he wants* her to be; she is given no opportunity to achieve subjectivity, but is deemed an object--a wife. The callousness of this perception reveals itself in his lack of compassion and understanding for Connie. His disdainful dismissal of her emotional outburst at the Soda Springs, for example, cruelly denies the intensity of her feelings. Connie, hoping the cougar that Roland is determined to kill will be unharmed, "[w]ith a sudden fierce passion . . . throws herself down beside the spring, pounding on the ground" and crying,

> Make him miss! Make him miss! Make him miss! . . . For years I followed you from army base to army base, and every fall I followed you and the dogs over the hills and coulees, and I hated it. I hated the dogs. I hated the guns. Sometimes I hate you, Roland. (466)

Roland reacts with no more than a raised eyebrow, a scowl of contempt for her lack of control, and a disparaging comment about her state of mind. "Get up. Get hold of yourself" (466), he demands, embarrassed rather than concerned about Connie's words.

And then he glibly explains her frustration as a result of her new found interest: "Ever since she joined those bird watchers my wife talks a lot of mealy-mouthed drivel. She doesn't mean half she says" (466).

Roland's perception of Connie's "fierce passion" as "mealy mouthed drivel" invalidates her feelings, making clear the indomitability of the patriarchal trap she wants to escape. Once again Ringwood uses the landscape to enhance female representation through images of entrapment (and freedom): this time the British Columbia wilderness becomes a symbolic extension of the struggle to assert natural freedom over patriarchal entrapment. The land and its creatures are subject to the whims of people who either preserve and admire (Connie, Shelley, and Jasmine) or exploit, control, and destroy (Eardley, Alice, Roland). In her examination of the play, Geraldine Anthony categorizes the characters into two types--"those who have varying degrees of freedom, and those who are imprisoned by their own narrow attachments" (Gwen 128). Connie, however, seems to elude either category, for the images of freedom and entrapment contributing to her representation suggest that although she is now conscious of the trap she is in, she is unable to escape. As a bird *watcher*, she vicariously experiences the freedom she is denied: "Oh, it's the loons. It's been a long time since I heard loons calling. . . . Wild. Wild and free" (465). As she struggles for self-expression, Connie is drawn to the freedom the birds possess, simultaneously admiring and envying their liberty, but Roland's philosophy that "[b]irds and beasts were put on this earth for our use" (449) extends to his assessment of her role within their marriage, diminishing Connie's hopes of escape. Her heartbreaking explanation of why she remains within the system she now rejects is indicative of the generational attitudes accompanying her marriage: "Where would I go? We own everything together. We're . . . we're all each other has . . ." (467).

Initially, the complexity of Connie's situation seems to be juxtaposed with the simplicity of Shelley's. In the opening scenes of The Lodge, Shelley's words and actions, as well as the words and actions of others, contribute to a straightforward and simple representation of an independent, confident, and self-aware young woman. Like Ruth in Still Stands the House, Shelley seems to achieve a type of hero status, but this time from a feminist perspective: she travels in Europe as a teenager, she is described by her cousin as "the freest person" (477) he knows, she constantly defies her parents' conservative demands, and she undertakes the operation of a run-down lodge in the British Columbia wilderness. However, no longer content with simplistic representations, Ringwood soon reveals a weakness in what appears to be Shelley's strength--her ability to see beyond the limitations of patriarchal expectations.

Early in the play, the audience learns that Shelley's husband, Allan, has betrayed her confidence by booking a hunting expedition at the lodge, an act that breeches their mutual decision that the lodge be a retreat for people concerned with the preservation, not the destruction, of wilderness and wildlife. Ignoring Shelley's conviction and their shared decision, Allan chooses to engage the expedition in order to assure some income for the bleak months ahead. To Shelley, Allan's actions foreshadow the collapse of their relationship into the stereotypical patterns of dependence and coercion that control both her mother's marriage and her Aunt Connie's. His decision to exclude Shelley implies Allan's disrespect for her opinions and his invalidation of her interests. She feels compelled to conclude, "I don't seem to be able to be a wife and a person too. And I think all Allan wants is a wife. It's a silly word--wife. I don't like it" (464). Less significant acts and comments seem to corroborate Shelley's assumption that Allan, now that they are married, has certain expectations of her role. He glibly comments that his socks are mismatched because Shelley is "color blind" (449), he dismisses Shelley's reaction to the hunters he has booked as "unreasonable" (452), and he casually criticizes her artistic endeavors saying, "Shelley doesn't look carefully at things. Like those horses. . . . Their legs look broken. Horses' legs aren't made that way" (441). In each instance Allan's words seem to echo Roland's dismissive view of Connie and give grounds to Shelley's fears that their marriage is becoming more and more like her mother's and her aunt's.

In the last two scenes, however, Ringwood forces the audience to re-think their perception of Shelley. She remains an independent and honest young woman whose impetus toward a re-evaluation of her marriage is sound, but she is also a person who, in spite of her awareness of the patriarchy's refusal to acknowledge female autonomy, inflicts similar impositions on her husband. By assuming that the happiness she and Allan shared in the summer months as they "were laughing and joking together" (441) has been so quickly replaced by patriarchal hypocrisy, Shelley imposes her own set of expectations on Allan. Without listening to his explanation that he booked the hunters so they would be able to make their fall payment on the lodge (valid at least in terms of practicality), Shelley simply assumes Allan is fulfilling his role as patriarch. She ignores Allan's acknowledgemetn that is "free to choose" (471), his recognition that they are "a thousand miles apart" (471), and his insistence that the lodge and its undertakings remain a shared responsibility (472). Her inability to listen to Allan and her perfunctory dismissal of his opinions and feelings link Shelley with the precepts of a patriarchal ideology that deny individuality.

By representing Shelley as a woman who, in spite of her awareness of the patriarchal structures that shape her *woman's* world, remains oblivious to the circumstances contributing to her husband's actions and attitudes, Ringwood responds to Jill Dolan's definition of material feminism. Dolan states, "Rather than considering gender polarization as the victimization of only women, materialist feminism considers it a social construct oppressive to both women and men" (10)[12]. Allan, whose struggle to avoid the pitfalls of patriarchy is initially cloaked by the defensive sarcasm that typifies his early conversations with Shelley, later explains how he feels trapped by her expectations. He says,

> You seem to want to push me into some role. . . the destroyer, the killer. . . As if I were out to trap you. I'm not. If you really think of me as some bloody-minded Cain, then you'd better leave me. I may not draw or paint or make pots . . . but I can like those things. I even like those damn Spanish dancers [a clay sculpture]. I like your horses but I can't help seeing that their legs look broken. I'm not out to cripple your talent, trap you. Why couldn't you believe me, trust me? If I really am the man you seem to think I am, you'd better leave me. (484)

As Shelley listens to her husband's frustrated pleas, she realizes how her fear of becoming like her mother or her aunt has influenced her response to Allan. She tells him, "I think I've been afraid of . . . turning into my mother or Aunt Connie" (484). Like Alice who refuses to listen to her daughter and her sister, like Roland who refuses to listen to Connie, Shelley has refused to listen to Allan, proving her susceptibility to the patriarchal hypocrisies she despises.

The helplessness that Allan and Shelley feel as they are trapped by each other's expectations and the freedom they hope to attain through their mutual acceptance of and respect for each other's opinions is enhanced in the play by disparate images of the British Columbia wilderness. Eardley's plans to destroy the natural beauty and mystery of the hot springs by building a "recreational empire" (479) provide a pointed, albeit at times humorous, analogy to the destructive potential of patriarchal expectations that entrap each character's "natural" self within a constructed identity. Eardley explains his plan,

> Picture the whole thing . . . Sasquatch Hot Springs. Huge footprints on the rocks in the Canyon in permanent luminous paint. Sign--Follow the Sasquatch. An outline of a Sasquatch in colored lights right on top of the cliff.

> Big plastic animals at the gate--bear, moose, cougar, just like real life only four times the size. The springs and swimming pools flooded with changing colored light. (479)

The "empire" Eardley wants to create bears absolutely no resemblance to the wilderness that exists and, of course, the "big plastic animals" simply are not "like real life" no matter how much he believes they are. His disregard for the *natural* state of the wilderness parallels patriarchal disregard for the individual (and natural) expressions of women (and men) in society. Opposing the ridiculousness of Eardley's unnatural vision is the honest appeal of the vision shared by Connie, Shelley and Allan, and Jasmine who see in the natural state of the wilderness a freedom they long to imitate. For Shelley and Allan, the ospreys signify their renewed commitment to one another:

> Shelley: Sometimes when you hold me, our hearts beat right together. . . the same beat. Then when we get far apart--it seems so hard to get back together again. . . We lose each other. . . .
> Allan: Something I saw this morning . . . the ospreys flying. They'd soar way apart and then they'd fly back together and fly awhile and then off they'd go, flying far apart again but always they'd come together. They looked so free, flying like that. I envied them . . . for us. (484-5)

Key to Shelley's reconciliation with Allan is the influence of her grandmother, Jasmine Daravalley, who encourages Shelley to listen to her husband. Jasmine and Shelley share a friendship that may have been impossible in authentic representations of women in Ringwood's early plays.[13] According to Helene Keyssar, the scarcity of female friendships in early women's drama is indicative of "the era's as yet inability to provide feminist support for one another" (51). In Still Stands the House, Ruth receives no support from Hester in spite of her revelation that "I've never had a sister . . . I thought we'd be such friends" (33); but in The Lodge Shelley and Jasmine openly support and encourage one another. Their friendship goes beyond a general respect for one another to an actual sharing of ideals: their words and actions reflect personal ideologies that embrace individuality, freedom of expression, the laws of nature.

Like her granddaughter, Jasmine is an active woman with liberal sensibilities and a keen knowledge of who she is and what she wants, but her ability to listen without judging sets her apart from Shelley and contributes to her representation as a voice of wisdom and insight. Her wisdom lies in her ability to reserve judgement, to encourage her family to make discoveries on their own--a philosophy that threatens the notions of power and domination that shape patriarchal expectations. She tells her grandson, "People do what they want to do, Robin. I wouldn't think of interfering . . ."(477). And so, she does not tell Connie to leave Roland; she tells her that her actions should "depend on what [she] really wants" (469); she does not tell Shelley that she is being blinded by her fears of the patriarchy in her reaction to Allan, she tells her to "listen" and that she will "sort things out" (464). By emphasizing the importance of listening to oneself and each other in achieving independence and harmony, Jasmine challenges the validity of the patriarchal systems that rob Alice, Roland, and Eardley of their ability to listen.

Jasmine's representation as an independent, intelligent, and active individual offers an alternative to stereotypical representations of women, but it also offers an alternative to stereotypical representations of the elderly. Alice perceives her mother as "[f]lighty, thoughtless, and forgetful" (445), too old to behave responsibly. She says, "You see. She's quite irresponsible. We can't let her go tonight. She'll catch her death. . . . She's over-excited. She needs a sedative" (460). And Eardley reiterates her view, referring to Jasmine as a "spinny old lady" (440) and insisting that "we can't allow the old to hold back progress" (479). But these insensitive attitudes deny the validity and significance of Jasmine's attitudes and opinions as an elderly woman. Simone de Beauvoir notes that it is in old age that women "begin at last to view the world through their own eyes" (595-6). The honest reflections that Jasmine and Jimmy Lashaway share at the Soda Springs deny the stereotypical views that Alice accepts and society imposes.

> Jasmine: We should make a ceremony.
> Jimmy: Sing and dance? (Chuckling) That old tree would think it's funny, two old people singing and dancing underneath the moon.
> Jasmine: We could make a wish.
> Jimmy: At our age?
> Jasmine: I still have some wishes.
> Jimmy: Yeah. I have some too. . . .
> Jasmine: I wish not to be helpless. I wish to die before I'm helpless.
> Jimmy: I hope you get your wish. (462)

Through Ringwood's touching and sensitive portrayal of Jimmy and Jasmine the limitations of stereotypical views of the elderly become apparent.

Nonetheless, Jasmine experiences the same feelings of entrapment as Connie, Shelley, and Allan. She finds herself trapped by the expectations of her children, who selfishly plot to put her in an old age home in order to secure her financial and material wealth for themselves. When Jasmine's resistance to their plan is suspected, Alice consorts with her husband and sister to supply documents that will certify Jasmine's insanity, enabling the family to admit her to the Silver Threads home without her consent. Overhearing Alice's plans to coerce her into dependency, Jasmine feels she cannot escape:

> (Jasmine peeks out from behind the screen to make sure they have gone. She is on her hands and knees behind the screen. She is very upset. . . Allan comes in from upstairs.)
> Jasmine: Oh, Allan. Help me up. Quickly.
> Allan: Grandma. What's the matter? Are you all right?
> Jasmine: I just want to escape. . . I have to get out of here. They mustn't see me. I was trapped. Trapped. (480)

When Jasmine recovers from the shock of hearing her future planned without her participation, she decisively takes control of the situation and outlines her "escape." Although Alice compares her mother to the hunted cougar, Jasmine explains that humanity has a much better opportunity for survival: "The cougar had no escape route, Alice, I have" (488). She refuses to meet Alice's demands and informs the family of her plans: "I'm going to Australia [sic]. I've been offered a chance to teach, and study Maori Art" (486). Like Ruth in Still Stands the House, Jasmine realizes she must find freedom in a new environment; unlike Ruth, she succeeds.

Like Still Stands the House, The Lodge focuses on the natural environment and adheres to realist conventions of folk drama [14], but Ringwood's shift from melodramatic to psychological action within the orthodox structure allows her to explore increasingly feminist representations of women. Structurally, Still Stands the House is driven by its melodramatic linearity, reliant on highly-concentrated external action and polar characterizations. The Lodge eases away from melodrama; expanded form and thematic emphasis on the need for communication and understanding (rather than action) allow for politically conscious and careful representations of women that lead spectators to question, rather than perpetuate, conventional representations of women. In 1978, Ringwood recalled the "unliberated" representations of women in her early drama with chagrin and recognized that authentic depictions of women were impossible if a writer did not assume political responsibility. She says, "I wrote plays for years without fully accepting the responsibility I now feel must and should be accepted by the writer, I tried to write honestly but often chose material or themes that offered a self-protecting distancing" ("Women" 156). As Ringwood's writing matured, her insights into her subjects were re-shaped and the self-protecting distance she assumed in her early works was abandoned in favor of a personal and political approach to drama that became increasingly discernible in prairie theatre throughout the professional period.

Chapter 3

Representations of Women in Sharon Pollock's Doc and Joanna Glass's Play Memory

The amateur theatre movement with which Gwen Ringwood was associated in the 1930's and 1940's replaced the pre-depression professional theatre of stock companies and travelling troupes and served as precursor to a second period of professionalism characterized by permanent theatre houses and established audiences. This new professionalism was a necessary and natural response to an amateur movement that, in many instances, had begun to surpass amateur expectation. Benefiting from the expertise of dedicated dramatists in high schools and universities, and nurtured by the constructive critical dialogue that emerged from local and national competitions, some of the amateur companies were quickly becoming amateur in name only. The Dominion Drama Festival, established in 1932 to "foster the development of the Little Theatre" (Lee 98), succeeded in increasing the visibility of amateur talent nation wide, eventually cultivating Canadian directors, actors, and audiences who were capable of sustaining professional theatre on the prairies.

By the late 1960's, each of the major prairie centres had become home to a professional regional theatre.[15] The permanent venues, established audiences, and (supposed) commitment to indigenous drama that typified these new theatres created a potential market for Canadian playwrights whose skills had been largely overlooked during the amateur theatre movement. In 1972 the Canada Council's decision to increase subsidies for theatres producing Canadian plays heightened the playwrights' hopes of establishing indigenous drama on the prairies. For the most part, however, the professional theatres remained "regional" in name only. Jerry Wasserman remarks on the lack of commitment shown by the professional theatres in the establishment of a native drama:

> Rather than living up to the original promise of the regionals to create new models adapted to the distinctive needs of their communities, which surely should have meant presenting plays written about those communities from within them, the large subsidized theatres mostly tried to emulate Broadway and the West End. (Introduction 15)

With the Canada Council incentives going largely unheeded by regional theatres, Rina Fraticelli's observations ten years after the Council's entreaty are not surprising. She notes the "Group of 18" theatres that "receive[d] the highest level of Canada Council subsidization [57%]" produced "the lowest proportion [26%] of Canadian plays of any of the groupings of Canadian theatres [her study] examined" (119).[16] This apparent hesitancy of regional theatres to produce Canadian plays did not daunt Canadian playwrights at the genesis of the professional period. Unlike their amateur era counterparts whose "healthy western spirit of pioneer determination" (Bessai, "Prairie Playwrights" 177) was often the sole impetus to their writing, playwrights of the 1960's and 1970's were lured by the possibility of playwright-in-residence programs, commissioned works, and established audiences.

While professional theatre was re-establishing itself on the prairies, the 'second wave' of the feminist movement was sweeping North America and Britain. The popular slogan of the movement advocated "the personal is political," encouraging women to open to public and political scrutiny the injustices they had suffered under oppressive and repressive patriarchal systems. The public nature of theatre made it an immediate and obvious forum to communicate this new feminist politic, but the conservativism of the regional prairie theatres thwarted playwrights who were writing politically charged, personal theatre.[17] The Canada Council impetus to produce Canadian works did not delineate subject matter (nor playwright gender), and theatre boards were wary of political scripts that might alienate regular patrons. Margaret Hollingsworth outlines the difficulties of having a feminist play produced:

> Unlike the novel, the play is public; the playwright is required to fight for her ideas, and defend them in the forum of workshops, rehearsals, and, after the production, in the media. Her critics will be harsh, particularly if she is a feminist playwright. . . . [T]he drama critic's reaction, unlike that of the critic of prose, will have a direct effect on whether anyone goes to see her play, whether she makes any money from it, . . . and whether she will ever be asked to write another play. It's a tough way to make a public debut, and most women are woefully ill-equipped to handle it. (22)

Statistics regarding the number of produced female playwrights in Canadian theatre support Hollingsworth's theory. Fraticelli's study reveals that only 10% of the 1156 plays produced in 104 theatres across Canada between 1978 and 1981 were written by female playwrights (114). Within this 10%, however, some playwrights chose to dramatize feminist concerns, and the creation of more complex roles for women, often characterized by innovative and distinctive representational techniques, became slowly but steadily more discernible in prairie theatre during the professional period. Whether the changing representations reflect direct or indirect influences of the feminist movement is difficult to gauge, but the growing awareness of a feminist consciousness is undeniable.

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Sharon Pollock and Joanna Glass are two prairie playwrights whose careers have been challenged by the often conservative politics of the professional theatres. Pollock's vision of theatre as a medium that should be "part of the quality of essential life--like hospitals and social services--rather than something you just [go] to five times a year to be entertained [by]" (Godfrey) conflicts with the more traditional view of mainstage theatre as a revenue-generating forum dedicated to entertainment. Glass, on the other hand, asserts the apolitical function of theatre, insisting "the immediacy of theatre has to be always entertaining" (Fair Play 126), but finds her work rejected by producers who are uncomfortable with her expatriate status. In Canada, her American residency cast doubt upon her legitimacy as an indigenous theatre artist, and in the United States, her exploration of personally germane prairie subjects, both thematic and symbolic, led producers to question the relevancy of her work for American audiences. Nevertheless, both women hold and practice strong convictions regarding their work and in doing so have been able to establish successful independent voices.

Sharon Pollock's discovery of her political voice coincided with her move from the Maritimes to the West in 1963. She gained her early theatre experience as an actor, stage manager and box office manager at Theatre New Brunswick in the late 1950's and early 1960's, but her move served as a catalyst in her decision to replace the inherent limitation of acting "somebody else's story" with the freedom of expressing her own. In an interview with Cynthia Zimmerman she explains, "I began to write because I felt I had no voice, even though I was working as an actor and playing in plays. I was always assuming the voice of somebody else, telling somebody else's story" ("Towards" 36). Many of Pollock's first plays were written for children's theatre,[18] but the "voice" she sought to express found a more powerful outlet when she began to write political docu-dramas for mainstage theatre in the 1970's. Through these early works, Pollock developed a reputation as a playwright who risked confrontation and controversy by unabashedly exposing the corrupt motivations of patriarchal and governmental systems.

In 1984 Pollock proved that her often contentious and feisty political voice was not limited to writing plays. She became artistic director of Theatre Calgary in June, but after only three months of a one year contract she resigned, declaring, "The primary thrust of the theatre should be artistic and the present operational structure doesn't allow for the centrality of the artist" (Brennan). Her comments and abrupt departure piqued the

Theatre Calgary board, but this did not hinder Pollock from making similar accusations when she resigned as Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick after satisfying one and a half years of a three year contract in 1988. The enthusiasm that the press evoked by heralding the return of a successful hometown girl was soon dashed by Pollock's claim that the board was insensitive to the artistic goals of theatre (Godfrey). She believed the theatrical system at Theatre New Brunswick was obsolete and cited the board's "authoritarian, paternalistic attitude toward the disenfranchised" (Godfrey) as key in her decision to return to Calgary.

Pollock's departure from Theatre New Brunswick was based on the discrepancy between her political vision of theatre and the board's more traditional perspective. Pollock's desire to create a theatre that dealt with "the pain, suffering and anguish of the human condition" (Godfrey) frightened a board that linked entertainment value with comedy. Mardi Cockburn, president of Theatre New Brunswick at the time, recognized Pollock's impetus but did not believe it was congruent with the theatre's mandate. She states,

> Sharon believes theatre should be meaty and powerful, and she was very strong in the feminism line. I think people would have preferred lighter things than Blood Relations, Road to Mecca and Agnes of God. They want to be entertained. They already get a lot of misery on the TV news. (Godfrey)

The "feminism" that Cockburn refers to has not always been an intentional or integral part of Pollock's art. Her early plays reveal a commitment to exposing public and social injustices, but exclude a personal, feminist focus. The female characters in her

1970's productions are most often stock or symbolic representations of women who are subordinate to the political issues the plays address. In Walsh (1973), for instance, female characters are overshadowed by males who figure more prominently in Pollock's criticism of the government's treatment of native Canadians in the early days of Confederation. The women who appear briefly on stage reinforce stereotypical views of women: Mrs. Anderson is a panicky and flustered settler, Mary Walsh patiently awaits her husband's return to the East where she is raising their three children on her own, and Pretty Plume is seen briefly in the dutiful role of nurturer and peacemaker.[19] The women in The Komagata Maru Incident (1976) do contribute more forcefully to the dramatic action than the women in Walsh. In this play, Pollock vehemently opposes the racism that fuelled the government's decision to ban Sikh refugees from British Columbia prior to World War One. Diane Bessai suggests "the women figures . . . are the playwright's chief device for providing moral perspective to events as well as for contributing to the emotional dimension centred in the character of Hopkinson" ("Sharon Pollock's women" 129). Nonetheless the representations are symbolic rather than complex. Evy, the madam of a brothel, is a stereotypically kind-hearted but ineffective lobbier for the refugees; her cohort, Sophie, is caught up in the sensationalism of the situation and functions as an example of the ignorance that accompanies racism. The unnamed Sikh mother whose constant but peripheral presence on stage represents the plight of her people is an effective but symbolic representation, a figure of compassion for the audience as well as Hopkinson. In the fictionalized portrayal of an actual hostage-taking incident that took place at the New Westminster Penitentiary in 1975 that Pollock conjures in One Tiger To A Hill (1979), Dede Walker and Lena Benz reveal the growing complexity of female representation in Pollock's plays. Although Dede's presence is central mainly because she is the counsellor taken hostage at the penitentiary, the ambiguous nature of her relationship with the inmate, Tommy Paul, raises questions about reform methodologies and the misuse of personal counselling. Lena, whose appeal is in her comic well-wishing as a determined but incompetent negotiator for Dede's release, is a foray out of stereotypical depiction even though her character is not allowed to develop fully.

The increasing complexity of female characters that distinguish Pollock's plays throughout the seventies and the increasingly political representations of women that characterize her plays to the present trace what I believe is an inevitable evolution in the work of a playwright whose intent is to educate audiences about the "victims of patriarchal systems that institutionalize injustice" (Wasserman, Review 67). The public and social criticism that typifies her work is enhanced by Pollock's growing awareness of the need to include a feminist perspective in a political, artistic landscape.

The pivotal work signifying the shift in Pollock's interest from the public to the personal as political is Blood Relations (1980). The play is set in 1902, ten years after Lizzie Borden is acquitted of murdering her father and step-mother in Fall River, Massachusetts. The metadramatic structure of the play raises questions about the roles women are forced to play in a society that embraces conservative, oppressive views regarding the social status of women. The contributions of this play to Pollock's craft are twofold: it marks her debut into theatre that focuses on feminist concerns and it leads to her discovery of a more personally relevant expression of a political voice. She recalls,

> [T]he particulars of the Borden case . . . were incidental to the real content of the play through which I came to deal with something very personal. (Of course all my plays are personal, but with eight full-length produced stage plays Blood Relations is the only play whose major roles are women's roles). ("Blood" 123)

Thus Blood Relations opens the door to more significant roles for women in her following two works, Generations (1981) and Whiskey Six Cadenza (1983), whose affinity to the personal is even more closely linked to Pollock's vision because they are set on the prairies that she has come to consider home. But even these dramas tell "somebody else's story"; it isn't until she writes Doc (1984) that she deals fully with a personal-political vision that focuses on her own childhood and adolescence.

Glass, like Pollock, began to write in order to discover an autonomous voice; but unlike Pollock, the voice she discovered was grounded in the personal from the onset of her writing career. Her early theatrical experience as an actor in amateur productions in her hometown of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan reached its zenith under the auspices of Betty Mitchell at Workshop 14 in Calgary, Alberta.[20] The two year apprenticeship with Mitchell led to Glass's performance in Workshop 14's 1957 Dominion Drama Festival entry, Anne of a Thousand Days, a performance for which she received a scholarship to attend the Pasadena Playhouse in California. Her experiences at the Playhouse gave Glass a "bellyful of what Hollywood meant" (Fair Play 110) and a distaste for theatre as "industry" rather than theatre as "art." Shortly after escaping the horrors of her Hollywood initiation by moving to the East coast of the United States, she abandoned her acting career entirely, concentrating her energies on raising three young children and beginning a career as a playwright. Motherhood did not grant Glass the time she needed to focus on her new profession, but it did provide the impetus she needed to articulate an autonomous voice. She remembers, "I never got out of the house. Consequently, the writing that I was doing was very sporadic, without focus. In desperation, after getting all these kids to bed at night, I wanted to do something that was mine, that was just mine" (Fair Play 113). The "something" that she discovered had its roots in her prairie upbringing. Even though she had lived in the United States for seven years before beginning her writing career, the content and setting of her work remained fixed in the experiences and memories of her formative years in Saskatoon.

Glass's assumption that a writer's formative years provide "a reservoir that nearly everyone goes back to in writing" (Fair Play 107) is basic to her belief that a personal frame of reference shapes a playwright's *oeuvre*. For Glass, her Canadian prairie roots, her American present, and her roles as mother, daughter and wife provide a frame of reference that yields pervasive familial concerns and prairie settings in her plays. However, each of these components resists the conventional perception of the universal in theatre; and the prairie settings (more than the dominant female characters) sparked misgivings about the production of her plays by the American theatres she was writing for. Glass recalls the difficulties of having her plays accepted:

> People would basically open a manuscript, see Saskatchewan and close it. . . . My problem was that I wrote about the Canadian prairie from places like Detroit and Berkeley and finally Guildford Connecticut, where I lived for twelve years. I had to, along with my agent [Lucy Kroll], convince people that there was universality in the writing. (Fair Play 106, 114)

Glass's persistence paid off and her plays were soon produced at Off Broadway venues; from a feminist perspective, however, the coup she achieved by having the "Canadianness" of her work accepted is less important than the fact that her plays are dominated by strong, complex, and often humorous roles for women. Glass believes that the frame of reference that shapes a woman 's life is rather limited. She says, "We [women] can only function out of our own frame of reference and our frame of reference, for most of us, is pretty narrow. . . . Home is our reality. We have got to wipe bums and get the food on the table and be sure the fridge is stocked" (Fair Play 116, 121). The conservative assumptions that appear to shape her definition of a woman's "reality" and purport a politic of acceptance and inevitability rather than a politic of change are undercut by on-stage representations of women who defy stereotypical assumptions. In an interview with Rita Much she comments on the non-traditional representations of women in her plays:

> I guess I just don't buy that tradition has to mean relegating females to kitchen sink dramas. . . . Again, it's a matter of mind-set and frame of reference but perhaps it's mostly selection. I knew women like that [strong and idiosyncratic] on the prairie. I also knew long-suffering drudges. For me there is little appeal, and even less drama, in the latter and I haven't selected to write about them. (Fair Play 124)

Although her final comment seems to deny the socially and culturally constructed reality of women who are unable to free themselves from the "drudgery" imposed on them by patriarchal systems, the dramatic and feminist appeal of female characters who resist stereotypes is irrefutable. Ironically her non-traditional representations of women stem from Glass's concurrence with the male-oriented, traditional view of theatre as a forum for entertainment. Like Mardi Cockburn, she insists on the importance of apolitical, comic theatre: "I miss humor so much in what I read about the alienation of man, the disintegration of the modern family, all this heavy handed, introspective, two-bit, Freudian kind of stuff. I just get very bored with it. I guess I have a need to be entertained, and I want to do that in my writing" (Somerville).

Glass upends the conventionality of this traditional perspective by sidestepping the assumption that the central figures that entertain are male. In Artichoke (1970), a comedic re-write of her first playscript "On The Mountain" (1966), Margaret stubbornly refuses to forgive her husband's infidelity. Her unconventional response to her husband's transgression is to ban him to the smokehouse. As Rita Much points out, Margaret returns her husband's "favor" by herself "commit[ting] adultery instead of smiling and putting up the good front as is the tradition of wives whose husbands have been unfaithful" (Fair Play 123). Lily Agnes, the child of her husband's affair with a water witch, is an interesting and humorous character caught up in the superficialities of Emily Post's advice on etiquette but radiating an uncustomary forthrightness and honesty that refuses to deny either her father's infidelity or her mother's stubborn reaction to it.[21] In the successful one-act companion pieces Canadian Gothic and American Modern (1972) Glass creates two female characters who echo her personal experiences with culturally dictated expectations of women. Glass comments on the plays:

> Together they illustrate, probably better than anything else, what I was going through at the time. I was very comfortable with the Canadian turf that I was writing about and I was also exploring the American. So Canadian Gothic is a very traditional, very accessible piece of writing, and American Gothic isn't. . . . In these two plays I was juxtaposing cultures. (Fair Play 108-109)

Neither the Mother in Canadian Gothic nor Pat in American Modern can find fulfilment in the household chores and unimaginative limitations implicit in their role as house wives. The escapes that they find, the Mother through art and Pat through collecting useless bits of garbage, are unconventional but, from a feminist perspective, ultimately ineffective. Jean, the daughter in Canadian Gothic is eventually forced to become a surrogate wife for her father after her mother's death and the hopelessness of Pat's eccentric response is humorous but futile.

In 1976, Glass undertook her most serious attempt at integrating the personal into her writing. The Manitoba Theatre Centre commissioned a play for its twentieth anniversary; the result was The Last Chalice (1977), a play that deals specifically and personally with Glass's childhood and early adulthood in Saskatoon. The play was harshly criticized by those who reviewed the premiere, the consensus being that the play was too long: the Edmonton Journal suggested "a better title would have been The Last Straw because of the "intolerable demands it placed on the audience" (Portman); the Globe and Mail states, "the main flaw is so blatant it defies belief that the Hasnain-Glass team hasn't fixed it: it needs to be cut, drastically cut" (Johnson). Glass does "cut drastically" in her re-write, Play Memory (1983) and somewhat shifts the focus from the storytelling, alcoholic father, Cam MacMillan, to the daughter who is alternately the unfortunate victim of his verbal and physical abuse or (less often) the object of his affections. Glass unwittingly takes the feminist challenge of making the personal political to heart and creates her most poignant female character, Jean.

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Glass's Play Memory and Pollock's Doc are two works that bravely venture into the realm of the personal.[22] The similarities between the plays are striking: both explore memories of painful childhood experiences, both examine the ambiguous nature of family relationships, and both are structured within memoryscapes that fragment and distil the suffering of youth. Yet the apparently congruent themes splinter within the more specific context of female representation. The disparate manipulations of character interaction, images of entrapment, and dramatic structure illuminate the unique personal and political perspectives that Glass and Pollock bring to their autobiographical works. Doc opens in darkness, a swirling of voices and fragmented conversations assail the audience; the voices fade out as the lights rise on Ev (the Doc). He is oblivious to the peripheral presence of Bob (his wife), Katie (his daughter as a child), and Oscar (his best friend), until the adult Catherine enters and encourages these characters, who abide solely in the "sometimes shared, sometimes singular memories" of father and daughter, to participate in a reconstruction of the past. Catherine and her father interact in a kaleidoscope world of past and present that illuminates the terms of a destructive family situation that ends in suicide, estrangement, and despair. The female characters represented within this volatile (and for the most part accusatory) domestic circumstance are mother and young daughter. The conflict that erupts between them originates with the erosion of Bob's self-esteem and is fuelled by Katie's alliance with her father, the perpetrator of Bob's deterioration. The guilt that Katie experiences following Bob's suicide is not directly addressed until, as an adult, Catherine returns and confronts her memories.

Although Catherine's return home sets memory into motion, her mother's situation becomes the focus of character and audience interest. As Bob interacts with her husband and her daughter the audience witnesses her transformation from a brash, confident career woman who states, "I don't give a fig for regulation or rules, only ones I make myself" (48), to a housewife awash in alcoholic despair: "I can't do anything. . . . There's nothing I can do" (97). Bob is represented as a woman who, in spite of a strong sense of independence and awareness of self, is unable to overcome societal predilections that govern her role as wife and mother. Ev's conservative ideology regarding his wife's position in society and Katie's accusatory reaction to her mother's deterioration contribute largely to Pollock's representation of a character who, in retrospect, she fears dominates the more positive representation of Catherine ("Towards" 38). Bob is caught between societal perspectives and a once strong, but now diminishing, vision of self. The memory structure of the play reinforces her helplessness; on stage she exists only in the memories of her negligent husband and young daughter who unwittingly conflate her *role* as wife and mother with her *reality* as Bob Roberts.

Prior to her marriage, Bob is an efficient and respected nurse; after her marriage, she finds her personal achievements and ambitions dismissed and ignored by her husband. Ev denies Bob's pleas to continue to work with short-sighted, selfish arguments that attest to his ignorance of his wife's needs: "Half the nurses in that goddamn hospital are lookin' for a doctor to marry so they can sit on their ass, and here you are screamin' cause you're not on your feet twelve hours a day bein' overworked and underpaid" (60). Rendering Shelley's fears in The Lodge reality, Bob ceases to exist as an individual when she becomes Ev's "wife" and is collectively defined as one of "half the nurses in that goddamn hospital". She is usurped into a role that society dictates and Ev supports:

> Bob: I want to go back to work.
> Ev: Where would you work?
> Bob: I'm an R.N., I'll apply at the hospital.
> . . .
> Ev: Look, you're just not an R.N. anymore. . . You're not Eloise Roberts, you're not Bob anymore.
> Bob: Who am I?
> Ev: My wife. (54, 56)

Bob's individuality is subsumed by her position as wife and mother. Her appeals for fulfilment are met with silence or anger from her husband, whose constant absence exacerbates her painful situation.

Bob's initial reaction to Ev's expectations attest to the non-traditional female traits that have shaped Bob's motivations since childhood. She is angry, stubborn, and determined to have her needs met. But as she vehemently reasons with him, Ev ignores the logic of her arguments and concocts impossible scenarios that deny Bob's skills and neglect her individuality:

> Ev: You're working the O.R., the surgeon hits a bleeder, starts screaming for clamps, you're slow off the mark, and when the whole mess is under control, he turns round to give you shit, you take off your surgical mask and who does he see? Not a nurse, another surgeon's wife. My wife. Is he gonna give you shit?
> Bob: I'm not slow off the mark in the O.R.
> Ev: That's not the point, you're my wife, is he gonna give you shit?
> Bob: That's his problem, not mine.
> Ev: I'm in the O.R. I hit a bleeder. I scream for a clamp. I look at the nurse who's too fuckin' slow and who do I see? My wife!

> Bob: I'm not slow! I'm good in the O.R.
> Ev: That's not the point. (57)

Of course "the point" is that he simply does not want his wife to work. Even Bob's willingness to compromise and find employment as an office nurse is rejected. Bob responds to his narrow-mindedness with increasing anger, a troublesome characteristic to stage successfully. Discussing the depictions of angry women in her plays, Saskatchewan playwright Barbara Sapergia says, "Angry women characters are perceived as threatening and shrewish. It makes it harder to listen to what they say--this is a societal feeling that there's something wrong with these women, that they need *fixing* rather than being listened to" (26). Her assessment accurately describes Ev's reaction to Bob's anger, which reduces her problem to the need to "get out more" (60). Unfortunately, but predictably, her anger toward Ev is unsustained.

Bob's decision to channel the energy of her unacceptable anger into the more acceptable act of re-defining herself according to Ev's demands is less an indication of weakness than a testament to the dearth of positive role models that might have encouraged sustained anger as a positive means of articulating her frustration.[23] Helene Keyssar insists that the "recognition of women by women is a crucial step in overcoming oppression" (Keyssar 134), but for Bob this recognition is absent. When she looks to her mother for assistance, she discovers a perspective closely akin to Ev's. Bob confides in Oscar, "My Mama's so happy I married a doctor. I'm successful you see. I made something of myself. I married a doctor" (71). In spite of the years of hard work that her mother labored to assure Bob's education, she is not bothered by Ev's insistence that Bob discard her profession; on the contrary, she rejects Bob's unhappiness. Ev's mother demonstrates a similar coldness. Unable to relinquish her resentment toward Bob for marrying Ev, she cheats herself, as well as Bob, out of a support network that would have lessened their mutual pain because of Ev's neglect. Consequently the most obvious female role models cannot offer viable alternatives to Bob's situation.

The absence of female support in Bob's life, like the absence of female support for Connie in The Lodge, accurately depicts the circumstance of many women of Bob's generation. For as Keyssar points out "authentic reflections of women had to reveal the hesitations women had in making themselves vulnerable with each other" (121). With no "transformation models" available, then, Bob desperately strikes out on her own, trying to create a way of being that will both fulfil her needs and appease Ev. When she fails, she chooses to end her suffering by committing suicide. Helene Keyssar's analysis of Fish's suicide in Pam Gem's Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi can be profitably applied to Bob's death as well. Keyssar states "[The] suicide is tragic. It is not a cynical or defeatist gesture but a powerful reminder to the audience of the limitations of individual effort and the insufficiency of the liberation of women as a separatist endeavour" (134).

Before committing suicide, Bob repeatedly tries to discover an acceptable alternative to nursing, and the wholehearted determination and stubbornness that mark her attempts seem to assert her independence. However, since the alternatives she seeks pander to Ev's expectations rather than fulfil her own, her attempts are futile. Upon his request she learns to play bridge, attends I.O.D.E. luncheons, hires (and fires) a series of maids and cleaning women, and partakes in other tasks and leisure activities. These attempts at re-creating herself are inextricably doomed to fail because they disregard the essentials of who she is. At a luncheon meeting with Oscar she says, "Look around us. Look at all these pursey little lips. Look at all these doctors' wives. Do I look like that? Do I?" (69). She slowly becomes aware that her attempts to assimilate into her husband's world prevent her from maintaining an autonomous perspective of her own reality.

Bob's awareness is accompanied by increasing desperation. The anger that she abandoned in her attempts to convince Ev of her needs is displaced into the domestic and familial worlds that he insists supplant her career aspirations. In the home her anger becomes an inappropriate response to her situation. Catherine remembers Bob's fruitless graspings for control, but the significance of her mother's acts escapes her childlike analysis and exist in her memory as acts of destruction rather than misguided attempts at re-creation:

> I'll tell you what she does. What she does is, she starts doing something. Something big. That's how I can tell. She's alright for awhile--and then she decides she's gonna paint all of the downstairs--or we're gonna put in new cupboards- or knock out a wall! . . . We got so many walls knocked out, the house started to fall down in the middle! Can you believe that? (91)

Confused and frightened by her mother's actions, Katie aligns herself with Ev, the perpetrator of Bob's deterioration.

Katie's alliance with Ev pits mother against daughter and further reveals the negative force of Bob's misplaced anger. Simone de Beauvoir's theory regarding the ambivalence of mother-daughter relationships can be used to explain Bob's anger. de Beauvoir suggests "the pleasure of feeling absolute superiority--which men feel in regard to woman--can be enjoyed by women only in regard to her children, especially her daughters; she feels frustrated if she has to renounce her privilege, her authority" (579). Robbed of her "privilege" and "authority" by Katie's alignment with her father, Bob manifests her anger by cruelly berating her daughter with the possibility of Katie's role in her unhappiness. Knowing that her parents married because Bob was pregnant, Katie associates the deterioration of the marriage with her presence, rather than with the limitations Ev places on Bob:

> Bob: Why would he marry me, eh? Why would a brilliant young man, whole life ahead of him, why would he marry me? Eh? Do you know why? Do you know!
> Katie: No.
> Bob: Why would he do that?!
> Katie: I don't know.
> Bob: Answer me! . . .
> Katie: I know. Inside I know. He had to. . . . Inside I do know. Because of me--and that's what went wrong. (101)

Pollock refuses to sentimentalize the mother-daughter bond. Bob wants the support of her daughter, but when the mother-daughter pact is breached by Katie's alliance with Ev, Bob retaliates. The deliberate arousal of Katie's guilt, the solace Bob seeks in her relationship with her son, and the inadvertently alienating effects of her alcoholism distance mother and daughter. Katie's guilt is compounded when she admits that she doesn't love her mother and wishes she were dead:

> Katie: I hate you!
> Bob: Not afraid to say it!
> Katie: I hate you and I wish that you were dead! . . . I wish and wish and someday you will be dead and I'll be happy! . . .
> Bob: Katie!
> Katie: She's a drunk and that's what we should say!
> Bob: (to Catherine) Katie?!
> Catherine: Stop. (118-119)

Of course, Bob's death does not make Katie "happy." The scene marks Bob's departure from the stage and Katie's decision to leave home. Her move signifies her escape from the conservative expectations that led to her mother's demise, and sets up Catherine's response as an alternative to her mother's. Just as Jasmine and Shelley offer alternative ways of being to Connie (and to a lesser degree Alice), so Catherine offers an alternative to Bob. Catherine's professional successes, which she achieves independently, refute the authority of the stereotypes that shape her mother's sad response. She is represented as a woman who refuses entrapment: she leaves home and becomes a successful writer who *chooses* to remain unwed and childless.

Catherine's escape, however, is somewhat illusory for although she escapes her father's expectations, she does not escape the feelings of guilt that accompany her memories of her mother. Her departure from home may allow her the geographical distance needed to suppress memories of her childhood struggles, but her true escape commences only when she returns home. Fortunately, she is able to return to the site of her entrapment and view the situation from a transformed perspective. Adulthood enables her to view her mother's situation with sympathy rather than confusion and resentment. In her forays into memory, Catherine pleads with her younger self to stop the accusations and she pleads with her mother to treat the young Katie gently. The completion of her journey into memory instigates an understanding of her father and mother that will allow Catherine to assuage the feelings of guilt that haunt her.

Contrary to Audrey Ashley's view that "[c]onstruction has never been Pollock's strong suit and in this case her method has rocked against the material," the fragmented bending of time in Doc creates a theatrical space that parallels the intangible quality of memory and at the same time contributes purposefully and substantially to the representation of women in the play.[24] The shifting and complex interactions between past and present coincide with feminist performance theory that suggests linear, realistic dramatic form inhibits a female voice from emerging because it incorporates the traditional unities of time and space that canonic (and therefore male) drama embraces.

In Doc the unique dramatic structure governs mother-daughter interactions and itself becomes a structural metaphor for Bob's inability to escape the confines of memory and Catherine's position of power as conjurer, and therefore controller, of memory. Within the surreal structure, Catherine directs memories while Bob only exists in them. Because Bob is never seen outside the limitations of memory, hers is only a partial representation. This fragmentation restricts the presentation of Bob's perception of her situation, (except for the moments when she reminisces about her own past) replacing it within the limited perspective of a young daughter and a negligent husband; in memory as in life she exists as mother and wife, but not as Bob Roberts. Catherine, on the other hand, exists and functions outside of memory, using memory to help confront a painful past.

The non-linear associative structure of Doc allows the audience to witness Catherine's maturation as she learns to accept her position in Bob's life and death, but it is also important in establishing Katie's relationship with her father. As a child, Katie aligns herself with her father because she needs to associate herself with someone other than her alcoholic, unpredictable, and angry mother. The father-daughter bond does not imply shared interests or affection, however, for Ev's dedication to his career excludes daughter as well as wife. When Catherine returns home as an adult, she is able to articulate the neglect she felt as a child, but the distance she remembers from her childhood continues to haunt their adult relationship, manifesting itself in sharp differences of opinion on familial and professional responsibility. The distinct patterns of movement each character is allowed within the carefully constructed framework of the play highlights their philosophical differences.

Ev moves easily between time frames, at once a 73 year old retired doctor and a young man. He has only to don a suit jacket from his younger days to signify his physical transference into the realm of memory. Catherine, however, is unable to move so easily between past and present. Although Pollock contends that Catherine "is able to speak across time to her father, to her mother, and to her younger self" (Playwright's Notes), her words are often unheeded or unheard by the memory characters. In her prefatory notes, Pollock clearly establishes the parameters of Ev and Catherine's movements:

> Although EV relives the past as a younger man, we never see CATHERINE any age but in her mid-thirties. She is able to speak across time to her father, to her mother, and to her younger self. CATHERINE and KATIE blend, sharing a sense of one entity, . . . [but] this should not be interpreted to mean that CATHERINE and KATIE share one mind or are always in accord. They are often in conflict. (Playwright's Notes)

As Ev participates in and Catherine witnesses scenes from their pasts, the "conflict" that distinguishes Catherine from Katie becomes the *reason* for her limited movements. Because Catherine's adult understanding of her family conflicts with the childlike analysis of Katie, she is unable to participate in the memories she conjures. Her perspective is no longer a child's perspective, so she is unable to assume her role as a child in memory. *Two* Catherines exist on stage, signifying the separateness of adult and child. Ev, on the other hand, has remained unchanged since his wife's death. His ideas and attitudes are the same at 73 as they were at 53, making his ready transference between past and present free from ideological conflicts. If Ev had undergone change, he, like his daughter, would be unable to detach himself from the present and exist in memory. However, neither his own loneliness nor Catherine's promptings as she leads him to reconsider his past, change Ev's vision. His retrospective musing yields no remorse, only the inflexible opinion that his daughter, like his wife, defies expectation. His insistence that Catherine marry and have children because "A woman your age should be raisin' a family" (25) reveals how little his attitudes have changed.

Also unchanged is Ev's perception of his role in his wife's suicide. When he is questioned about Bob, he defends his position by maintaining that his public duties were more important than his domestic responsibilities:

> Supposin' it were, her death my fault, put a figure on it, eh? Her death my fault on one side--and the other any old figure, thousand lives the figure--was that worth it? Was it? I'm askin' you a question! Was that worth it! (123)

Ev is unable to make the connection between the anguish he caused his family by neglecting them as they were growing up and the emotional and physical distances that separates them from him in his old age. He refuses to accept responsibility for his role in the destruction of his family, continuing to insist that his decision to put his practice first was the right one.

Catherine's reasons for returning home are twofold: her primary motivation seems to be reconciliation with her partially estranged father, but the memory sequence reveals that her desire to assuage the guilt she feels over her mother's death provides an even more powerful impetus. The reconciliation that takes place between Catherine and her father is tempered by Ev's inability to change. Even the act upon which Catherine and Ev's reconciliation is founded, the burning of the unopened letter that may implicate

Ev in his mother's suicide, suggests that he denies rather than accepts familial responsibility. Catherine, however, has moved beyond the need to force Ev's self-recognition. She burns the letter that haunts her father, simultaneously forgiving Ev and declaring the inner peace she has gained by confronting her past.

The union between Katie and Catherine signifies a more complete reconciliation. In one of the rare moments when Catherine is able to make her presence felt across the boundaries of memory, she embraces Katie and asserts the symbolic conclusion of her journey (78). She returns home to appease the guilt and remorse that accompany her memories of childhood and learns to accept that her resentment towards Bob was not responsible for the suicide. The feminist notion of symbolically uniting the "inner child" with the mature woman in order to gain a deeper understanding of self signifies the beginning of a new journey in which Catherine will be able to discover a more completely autonomous self.

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The neglect and alcoholism that darken Catherine's memories in Doc are intensified in Joanna Glass's Play Memory by the physical and verbal abuse Jean MacMillan suffers at the hands of her disillusioned father, Cam. In many ways, Cam is an appealing character: he is a boisterous Scots storyteller with an undisguised contempt for social pretensions, a hard working salesman who is dedicated to the team he supervises, and initially, a loving husband and father. But through Jean's memories the audience learns that the duplicitous betrayal of Cam by his co-workers shatters a previously contented middle-class family. Cam turns to alcohol to assuage his anger, and himself the "victim of impersonal company paternalism, in turn victimizes his wife and daughter" (Bessai, Introduction viii). Although the politics of family violence may seem black and white, Glass's personal experience leads her to emphasize the "greyness" of the issue: Jean is represented both as victim of her father's atrocities and of her mother's protracted inability to leave the abusive household; Cam's monstrous mistreatment of his daughter diminishes, but cannot erase, Jean's fond memories of her father. When mother and daughter finally leave the abusive situation, the feminist notion of power gained through escape is undercut because Cam, the perpetrator of the violence, insists on their departure. As a confident adult narrator who calmly recounts her memories of these turbulent times, Jean is a survivor of family violence whose existence echoes the theme in Glass's novel Reflections on a Mountain Summer: "If we're ever to walk abroad with peace in our hearts, the first thing we must do is learn to forgive our parents" (307).

The dramatic structure that shapes the action in Play Memory is less intricate than the "kaleidoscope" patterning of Doc, but the simpler structure, which asserts a separateness between past and present that is not always clear in Doc, contributes to the representation of Jean by sharply delineating the child/victim and adult/survivor roles that define her character. In place of Doc's multifarious mingling of past and present, Play Memory provides a chronological ordering of past events which Jean calmly introduces and explains to the audience. The composure that permeates her introductions contrasts sharply with Catherine's emotional interactions with her past, leading to the understanding that Jean is a woman who has already dealt with the tragic consequences of her father's disintegration and is now reconstructing this past for the audience.[25] As narrator she calmly recounts the night her father was betrayed:

> It was quick and brutal. . . . The police had found him in a hotel in Yorkton. He had taken two forty-ounce bottles to his room; he drank them; he got into a bathtub. The water turned to ice around him as he lay there, unconscious, for forty eight hours. Billy lived on Twenty-Eighth Street, Roy on Bedford Road, Ken on Avenue H. My mother and I were never allowed to walk on those streets again. And, gradually, things began to disappear from our house. (22)

Her dispassionate account of the night that changed her father's life, and thus her own, belies the anguish, confusion, and pain that dominate the memory scenes after Cam's betrayal. The memory sequence following this introduction jars the audience with its violence:

> Cam: You want something, don't you? Don't sit there like a ninny. Speak up! Ask! What *is* it you want?
> Jean: (She has tried to delay the combat he is looking for, but he is too persistent. She jumps up.) All right! A Christmas tree! Why can't we afford a Christmas tree? You get rye whiskey when you want it. You've given Melzewski [the bootlegger] our dining room furniture, your golf clubs and all of our bone china! Give him something and get us a tree!
> Cam: I'd like to give him *you*, you little bitch! (He runs for her. She runs.) I wonder how much you'd fetch on the open market! (Cam catches her. He hits her hard, in the face. Immediately we see blood, running from her nose. Jean screams.) (24-25)

Thus, disturbing and chaotic memories of childhood are juxtaposed with Jean's calm, adult response to them, and a structural duality based on distinct differences between past and present underlines the transformation that Jean achieves as an adult.

The interruption of brutal memories by reflective narration is a consistent pattern within Play Memory's structure, in clear contrast to the turbulent memory patterns in Doc. Glass's more stable patterning of memory reflects the more stable perspective that Jean has gained on her past. Thus the play becomes more a reconstruction of the past than, as is Doc, a process of dealing with it. At the same time that the dual structure advances the child/victim and adult/survivor representations of Jean, however, it keeps secret the process of struggle that must have been a part of the journey that allowed her to forgive her father for mistreating her.

In Doc, the audience witnesses Catherine's struggle to come to terms with her past as the split-self strives to reunite; in Play Memory, Jean's calm reflections suggest the journey toward self-discovery has already been completed.[26] The absence of Jean's transformational process denies Helene Keyssar's theory that "[a] theatre that genuinely include[s] women has to take as a central convention, the overt display of people becoming other" (59). The "becoming" is not a part of Glass's text. Although the play is undeniably "lyric, painful and inexpressibly moving" (Rae 230), it is difficult to understand Jean's acceptance of her past (in spite of Cam's blustering charm) without the inclusion of the struggle that led to her ability to forgive her father. The link between an unstable past and a stable present remains unexplained.

Jean's past and present are not the sole temporal signifiers of memory structure in Play Memory. With her first words Jean speculates about the ambiguous nature of memory, and these speculations add another dimension to the structural parameters of the action and allow her a freedom that is not allowed Catherine in Doc. Jean tells the audience,

> As is the case with so much of memory, it's an amalgam of what actually happened, and what was reported. I've discovered that what actually happened is often the most suspect--only half of the story. We were too entangled then, too mired in the dailiness of living to ever see ourselves as others saw us. (6,7)

And so the audience is allowed glimpses of "ourselves as others saw us" in memories of Ruth and Cam that exist independently of Jean. Unlike Catherine, whose constant presence on stage reminds the audience that the images of Bob, Oscar, and Ev as a young man exist only in memory, Jean absents herself from the action allowing her mother and father to develop and exist outside of the limitations that her memory may impose upon them. Jean's departures do not contribute significantly to her own representation, but they do allow Ruth to develop more fully than Bob, who exists as a composite representation of external (daughter and husband) perceptions.

The fuller representation of Ruth allowed by the dramatic structure encourages a more sympathetic, although in this instance a more conventional, female stage presence than Bob has in Doc. On the surface, Ruth resembles Bob: both women are raised in impoverished settings, both are influenced by the stoicism of their mothers, and both marry men who are fiercely dedicated to their careers. But Ruth's lack of a formal education distinguishes her from Bob. Without the educational means of securing employment, her options are limited. Cam provides the opportunity for Ruth to improve her situation through marriage. She embraces the middle-class lifestyle he offers and delights in settling into the expectations that society ascribes. Her decision to marry Cam is not, however, a purely economical one. When Jean is absent, the audience witnesses the companionable affection and sexual attraction that unite Cam and Ruth. Although their relationship fulfils stereotypical patterns of husband and wife roles, it is not until Cam loses his job and the happiness of their former life disappears that the negative impact of the patterns established within their marriage become apparent.

Unwittingly Ruth replaces one oppressive structure with another. The limitations of her impoverished upbringing are succeeded by the limited options of Cam's patriarchal demands; and although the implications do not manifest themselves fully until the seeming stability of their middle-class existence crumbles, Cam's need for power and control are evident in the good times as well as the bad. Prior to the betrayal he suffers from his co-workers, he relishes the responsibility of caring for "his boys". Even though his sales team is comprised of men his own age, Cam tells Ruth, "They're like my own sons" (19). He denies Ruth's claims that "being with them gives you a feeling of power" (19), but his response affirms rather than contradicts her assertion. He proudly explains, "Sometimes, in the winter, we'll all be out on the road and the whole province is under a blizzard. And I always know exactly where they are" (19). The sense of power that Cam's leadership role provides is also evident in his relationship with Ruth. He ridicules her desire to garner friendships outside of his contacts (19), he teasingly mocks her lack of education (8), and he reveals an implicit sense of ownership and display in his relationship with both Ruth (20) and Jean (17).

The destructive potential of Cam's paternalism is revealed when he loses his job--"the main source of his identity and the thing that most gratifies his ego" (Fair Play 121). He supplants the constructive power of his job with the destructive power of an abusive father and husband, and Ruth is forced to adapt to a threatening situation. Just as Glass herself insists that her writing is shaped by a personal frame of reference, Ruth's response is shaped by her experiences before and during her relationship with Cam. Sara Ruddick's theories on motherhood concur with Glass's representation of Ruth; Ruddick suggests "individual mothers . . . take on the values of the families and subcultures to which they belong and of the men with whom they are allied" (355). For Ruth the implications of this theory are doubly debilitating: by "taking on the values of the family she belonged to" Ruth embraces the conservative ideology of her prairie upbringing and by "taking on the values of the man with whom she is allied" she becomes dependent upon the material luxuries of middle-class consumerism.

When the contentedness of Ruth's marriage is violently disrupted by Cam's abusive alcoholism, her reliance on the traditional model of survival provided by her mother is disastrously inadequate. Like Bob in Doc, Ruth has no "transformational models" to identify with and depends on her memories of her own mother's persistence to shape her response to an entirely unacceptable and brutal situation. However, the same traits of endurance and strength that her mother evinced during her pioneer existence prove destructive rather than constructive in a volatile domestic circumstance. By choosing to remain in an abusive situation, not only does Ruth subject herself and her daughter to vicious verbal and physical assaults, but she also offers Jean a model for resistance that is inappropriate and self-destructive:

> Jean: I will not stay here. . .
> Ruth: (Grabbing Jean.) Yes, you will! Stay and learn how to handle a man like this! God forbid, you might marry one someday. (She pushes Jean into a chair.) Sit down! And listen! And get some steel in that spine of yours. And it doesn't take *mental resources* to have a good fight; all it takes is sticking power. (34)

Ruth views "sticking power" as a viable solution to their predicament, but it only serves to limit Jean's avenues of escape. She becomes a victim not only of her father's abuse but also of her mother's obedience to oppressive patriarchal systems. Ruth's intent--to keep the family together--may be deemed noble by societal standards that reify the image of family cohesiveness, but the illusion of power that Ruth holds on to perpetuates her own powerlessness. She tells her husband, "Even now, Cam, it's good to wake up with you, in the morning. And it's good for Jean, believe me, to have a private room, and a mother and a father under one roof, at one address" (54). Her words are sincere, but as Ruddick observes, by being obedient to traditional expectations "a mother may well be . . . colluding in her own subordination with . . . destructive consequences to herself and her children" (355).

The conservative ideology that leads to Ruth's insistence that "it's good to have a mother and father under one roof" provides only partial explanation for her determination to remain with Cam. As already mentioned, her lack of education limits the options available to Ruth and she is unwilling to relinquish the social status she has attained as Mrs. MacMillan. She says,

> It is *still* good to be Mrs. MacMillan! Oh, not like the old days, when the name got me credit at the butcher. But it's still good to belong in this neighborhood, to have this address. Selkirk's name came up the other day. They said, 'He's the manager of the Bank of Montreal.' I said, 'Yes, he lives on my street.'. . . 'The Reverend Gordon? . . .' 'Yes! . . . He lives on my street.' (54)

Ruth, unlike Bob, reaches a level of aspiration through her marriage to Cam. Ruddick points out, "Mothers are no less corrupted than anyone else by concerns of status and class" (361); and although Ruth's marriage to a man who rescues her from a life of poverty can hardly be considered "corrupt," her inability to surrender her middle-class existence when it becomes dangerous speaks pointedly to the oppressive power of the system she is trapped in.

Bob and Ruth both react angrily to the situations they are forced into, but while Bob's anger reveals itself in her struggles to escape, Ruth's anger inadvertently reinforces the patriarchal limitations that entrap herself and Jean. Marianne Hirsch explains, "A mother cannot articulate anger *as a mother*; to do so she must step out of a culturally circumscribed role which commands mothers to be caring and nurturing to others, even at the expense of themselves" (170). While Bob is willing to step out of the nurturer role, Ruth is not. The angry looks she shoots at Cam when he assaults Jean, her exasperated insistence that he follow A.A. recommendations, and her frustrated attempts to reason with him do nothing to *actively* change her situation. Ruth's anger manifests itself in her determination to remedy the situation from within the home.

Ruddick insists that traditional values, like those that shape Ruth's ideology, are "[due to] prevailing sexual arrangements and social hierarchies on maternal lives"; and therefore it is impossible to "blame mothers for their . . . obedience" (356). Jean fulfils this notion by displaying no resentment toward Ruth for her inability to leave the home. Contrary to the mother-daughter resentment that exists in the relationship between Katie and Bob, (or even Alice's resentment toward her mother in The Lodge) the mutual suffering experienced by Jean and Ruth creates a link that unites them, although in a covert way, against Cam's authority.

In both Doc and Play Memory, the inability of the mothers to leave tempestuous domestic situations subjects the daughters to unhappy childhoods, but the haunting figure in each daughter's memory is the parent whose stability is rocked by alcoholism. Cam and Bob both seek solace in the illusory world of drunkenness, but the destructiveness of their addiction manifests itself in different ways. While Cam resorts to physical and verbal battering of his daughter (and to a lesser degree his wife) in order to reassert lost authority, Bob's helplessness reveals itself in her attempts to re-create her surroundings and herself in a more 'suitable' manner. To her young daughter, Bob's actions are incomprehensible and frightening, and the adult Catherine does not deal with the emotional trauma that her mother's instability elicits until she returns home seeking to appease the ghosts that haunt her. For Jean the haunting figure is her father. The emotional, physical, and psychological damage that his abusiveness inflicts upon Jean is heightened by the ambivalence of their relationship.

Prior to Cam's alcoholic decline the father-daughter bond that unite he and Jean is loving and affectionate. Unlike the alliance that existed between Katie and Ev in Doc, which is defined largely by Katie's decision not to be like her mother or grandmother, Jean's relationship with Cam is built upon a shared love of language, storytelling, and song. Cam looks forward to fatherhood with tremendous enthusiasm; he refers to Ruth's mid-life pregnancy as a "miracle" and promises to be a responsible father. As Jean grows up he spoils her with possessions, the most wonderful being an ornate door for her closet. When the abuse begins, remnants of the love that existed between father and daughter give the audience, along with Jean, the hope that things may change:

> Cam: (Looks at Jean, sheepishly.) Know what I need?
> Jean: What?

> Cam: A hug and a cuddle. (Gesturing.) Come, sit down with me. (Jean sits beside him, on a couch. He puts his arm around her.) Let's do something pretty. We haven't done something pretty in a long, long time.
> Jean: What'll we do?
> Cam: You start, I'll follow.
> Jean: (She thinks briefly, then recites.) My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here . . .
> Cam: My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer...
> Jean: A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe...
> Cam: My hearts in the Highlands, wherever I go . . . The hills of the Highlands forever I love. (They are relaxed and calm. Cam is drowsy.) (36-37)

The tenderness of their affection is beautifully revealed in their love of language, but Cam's continued violence necessarily changes the dynamic of their relationship.

Jean is constantly haunted by Cam's violence. In a noisy classroom she imagines that she is going to be struck. She explains her reaction to the school councillor:

> Jean: The doctor knows my troubles. I . . . only wet when I'm hit.
> Halverson: But you were in home-ec last period, Jean. No one hits you in home-ec.
> Jean: I got . . . confused, for a moment. . . . There was a lot of noise in the class. A lot of girls, arguing, and lots of machines running. And I . . . mistook it, you see. I got scared. . . . And then Miss Pendleton lifted a yardstick over my head. I'm sorry. I know it doesn't make sense. I thought she was going to hit me, and I wet. I don't understand it. (42)

Jean's escape from her father's violence is delayed by her mother's persistent attempts at recovering their lost happiness. But when Cam trades Jean's prized closet door for a bottle of whiskey, she is traumatized into silence. For two weeks she neither eats nor speaks, creating for herself a temporary, but insubstantial, escape from the cycle of abuse that entraps her. Ruth is forced to re-evaluate her assumption that the family should stay together. Upon Cam's insistence, Ruth finally agrees to leave and escape is achieved.

As an adult, Jean recognizes that "[t]he most admirable thing he'd done in his life was let us go" (61). Her removal from the abusive situation was key to the recovery of the self-confidence that pervades her narration. The horrific memories remain horrific, but she is able to observe and take part in her recollections without succumbing to the emotional anxiety that the memories conjure. In the closing scene, Jean's acceptance of the positive role each parent played in her life is implicit. The stage directions assert the symbolic reunion of the family:

> Ruth comes part-way down the hall, in dim light. She is smiling. She is dressed as she would have been for a dinner at the Bessborough Hotel. . . . Cam is seen, up left of Jean. He is smiling. He is dressed in the suit, tie and fedora from the early forties. The house lights dim as Jean stands center stage, flanked by each parent.

Jean remains connected to both parents, but the image of her father is of the man who loved and cared for her, not the man who hurt and mistreated her. She recognizes and accepts Ruth and Cam as positive forces in her life, while remembering, but not blaming, either parent for the pain she suffered. Her acceptance contributes to the representation of Jean as a whole person.

Chapter 4

Representations of Women in Maenad's Aphra

The commissioning of Joanna Glass's The Last Chalice (the original version of Play Memory) by the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1977 and the premiere of Sharon Pollock's Doc at Theatre Calgary in 1984 proved to be indigenous exceptions to the British and American "rule" preferred by most regional theatres. Backed by an "increase in national sentiment" and the "emergence of an activist generation" (Filewood 16), however, Canadian playwrights began to respond to the regional theatres' token support of indigenous writing by creating an alternative professional theatre. The "alternative" proposed was "revolutionary and experimental in its aesthetics, . . . revolutionary in its social and political ideology," and often used "techniques of collective creation and improvisation with or without co-operation by a writer." But most importantly it emphasized the "need to support Canadian playwrights" (Usmiani 2). By the late 1970's, however, many of the alternative theatres found themselves entrenched in the conservative aesthetics they had initially opposed. The parallel efforts of the alternative movement and the Canada Council to engender a national drama aligned the alternative movement with a conservative subsidy system. Ironically, the funding that promoted the movement's nationalistic goals,[27] contributed to the erasure of the theatrical innovations it had initially espoused. Alternative theatres began to "retreat from the experimental aesthetics" (Brown

59) that shaped their early works until the drama presented by these smaller professional companies could no longer be termed "alternative."

The transformation of the alternative movement from an innovative theatrical presence into a smaller, but still conservative, professional theatre predicated the need for a "new" alternative vision. Alan Filewood comments,

> In the years following 1975, as alternate theatre attracted an increasingly middle-class and affluent audience and began to develop a star system of popular actors and playwrights, it generated its own alternative in the form of a flourishing, usually non-Equity, fringe theatre oriented toward experimental performance. (18)

The first Fringe Festival on the prairies took place in Edmonton, Alberta in 1982, and since its humble but successful beginnings has flourished and become a model for other Fringe Festivals across Canada.[28] Unlike the alternative movement of the late 1960's and 1970's, the Edmonton festival's dedication to the creation of "fringe" theatre remains unaffected by its increasing popularity. External pressure from boards, sponsors, or the public to produce certain types of theatre is non-existent because a play is not submitted to a review process. Judy Lawrence, the Festival Director since 1987, explains the board's expectations:

> The Fringe does *not* make qualifying statements as to *what is art* or *who is an artist*. We do *not* say: 'You can't present that idea; it may not work; it has never been done before; you're not a proven professional; it isn't theatre . . .' We say: 'Create exactly what you want to create, or are driven to create, or have created years ago but have been unable to sell to anyone else . . .' We say: 'It is your creation, no one else's, and not our's to judge.' (3)

The freedom to "create exactly what you want to create" makes fringe theatre particularly appealing to politically motivated theatre artists who often find their work rejected by professional theatre companies. For female playwrights, especially those writing with a feminist bent, the Fringe offers a rare opportunity to stage works that defy archetypal definitions of what is considered "good" or "acceptable" theatre.[29] The guideline components of feminist theatre proposed by Jill Dolan in The Feminist Spectator as Critic and Helene Keyssar in Feminist Theatre coincide with the "alternative" aesthetics encouraged by the Fringe's liberal mandates, suggesting the fringe movement's affinity with feminist performance. The complementary ideologies of feminist theatre and fringe theatre may splinter within more specific contexts (the politics of reform that inform fringe theatre do not necessarily spotlight the particular concerns of women), but the movement offers feminist playwrights artistic refuge from the conservative hegemony of professional theatre.

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In 1987 a loosely organized group of female theatre artists dedicated themselves to bringing feminist theatre to the Edmonton Fringe Festival. Rose Scollard, the playwright for the group, garnered the attention of fellow Calgarians at the 1985 Edmonton Fringe with the premiere of Nosey Parkers, the first of the Uneasy Pieces companion plays she drafted during a Theatre Calgary

Workshop the previous year. Together, Scollard and her new associates established Off The Page, a reading and support group for aspiring and established theatre artists. Erratically scheduled meetings followed which were particularly beneficial to new theatre artists like Scollard. She recalls,

> We met very sporadically. Sometimes several times a month, sometimes just one time a month, for a couple of years. We read and wrote things. . . . It was a very active little group. It was really good for me, very supportive, lots of discussion of what we wrote. (Personal interview)

When the group disbanded in 1987, Scollard, Alexandria Patience (actor), Sandra MacNeill (director) and Dawn Davies (director), continued to meet. They re-named themselves Maenad Productions and articulated their commitment to Fringe performances. For Scollard this meant the 1987 production of Metamorphoses I and II at the Edmonton Fringe Festival and the 1988 productions of Tango Noir at the Edmonton and Vancouver Fringe Festivals.

Convinced that their work could fill a "void" left by the "lack of a female vision in mainstream . . . and experimental theatre" (Patience, "Maenadic" 28), Maenad became discontent with the production limitations imposed on them by fringe *events* that took place once a year. With what has become trademark enthusiasm[30], they decided to establish themselves as a more permanent prairie theatre presence with a feminist mandate. In 1989 they exchanged the project-based organization most often associated with annual fringe productions for a full season of performances; they acquired the Joyce Doolittle space in the Pumphouse Theatre for the premiere of a new play; and they incorporated Maenad

Productions Theatre Society in order to be eligible for government funding. The new organization did not sacrifice its artistic commitment to innovative, female-oriented theatre. The artistic core of the newly established company, comprised of Scollard and Patience (remaining from the previous year), Nancy Cullen (a performance poet), and Brenda Anderson (director), continued to create theatre that challenged the aesthetic and ideological conventions of mainstage drama. Their ambitious first season featured three world premieres of Canadian plays: Scollard's Thirteenth God and Firebird and Cullen's Forever There.

Key to Maenad's commitment to produce "distinctively feminine drama seldom found in mainstream theatre" (Maenad Newsletter) is an organizational resistance to hierarchy and authoritarian control. While Nancy Cullen's emphatic declarations remove any doubt about the company's status as a collaborative theatre venture--"We are non-hierarchical. We do not have a hierarchy. There is not somebody with more status." (Personal interview)--Alexandria Patience's elaboration specifies the administrative "utopia" they strive to attain. She explains,

> It is a struggle because people are so used to hierarchy that when they come in . . . [t]hey give a hierarchy to us [Scollard, Cullen, Patience]. . . . What we want is for people to have an ongoing process of taking responsibility for saying what it is they want to do and then doing it; coming up with new ideas and then making them happen. It's a hard process, but it's worth it. It's a kind of utopia that we keep working towards and hierarchy can slip in; people force things on you at times and you have to try and say, 'No, let's get back down here and just go from this level'. (Personal interview)

Maenad's first season as an incorporated theatre company relied on Scollard and Cullen's independently written scripts, but its second season attempted to extend the company's policy of non-hierarchy to include artistic as well as administrative endeavors. The season premiere, Gone Tomorrow, took its first tentative steps toward collective scripting through the joint production of independently written monologues. The play is a series of monologues which examines the experiences of three women at different stages in their lives, a circumstance that lends itself to the semi-collaborative nature of the play. Scollard explains,

> Gone Tomorrow was my first collaboration, but we wrote separately. We knew we wanted to write monologues for women. It turned out that Nancy wrote two and I wrote one. They were very connected in theme and it was interesting to see how they fit together as a group of plays. (Personal interview)

Thus Gone Tomorrow provided Scollard with the opportunity to explore new territory as a playwright, but the experience did little to prepare her or Cullen for Maenad's "first real collaboration," Aphra. Together with Alexandria Patience, the women tested the artistic viability of their non-hierarchical ideal.

Utilizing the process of collective creation that had been an integral part of the alternative movement in the late 1960's and 1970's, Alexandria Patience, Nancy Cullen, and Rose Scollard undertook the writing of Aphra. The play's success has been established by demands for remounts (to which they complied in the fall of 1991--only seven months after its premiere), by requests from Alberta schools and community organizations for presentations on the play, and by its publication in the Fall 1991 issue of

Theatrum. But success did not come easily; Scollard describes the taxing process that led to the play's creation:

> Nancy, Alexandria, and I met and discussed things and decided what we wanted to do the play. That was a much more difficult process [than with Gone Tomorrow] and very time consuming. Unless you have a certain schema worked out for writing in that way it's extremely time consuming trying to suit everybody's work drives. Everybody has a different way of working. . . . One person would have time and the other wouldn't. It's very hard to bring three lives together. (Personal interview) [31]

Inspired by Cullen's enthusiastic re-discovery of Aphra Behn, the group dedicated themselves to re-creating the spirit of the woman and her *metier*. They found the collaborative process difficult,[32] but the challenges were accompanied by exhilarating rewards, not the least of which was the intimacy wrought between playwrights and subject. Constant interruptions and exclamations characterize an interview in which Patience and Cullen cannot mask their excitement about the "icon" they create:

> Cullen: With Aphra Behn we made her a bit of an icon. As opposed to having her lost in--
> Patience: We really didn't want her to be a victim. In some ways in the script you can see she is victimized by her times, by other women, by lots of other things.
> Cullen: Censorship, omission--
> Patience: But she's not a victim. Never! Of any of the things that drew me to Aphra it was her sense of power--
> Cullen: Her joy for life!
> Patience: Her vivacity! (Personal interview)

The playwrights' enthusiasm is echoed in the public response to the play, but as yet the critical reception of Aphra is limited. From a feminist perspective, Maenad's open commitment to creating women-centred theatre allows women playwrights to candidly explore representations of women freely. In Aphra, the Maenad collective manipulates character interaction, dramatic form, and metaphors of entrapment in a manner that forcefully asserts the feminist political intent of the script.

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Aphra begins with the tantalizing but eerie atmosphere promised by seances, spectres, and returns to the past. The ghostly Aphra Behn's slow progression from the depths of the stage is hauntingly presaged by echoing footsteps and the flickering candle she holds in her hands. Her shadowy silhouette gains substance as she approaches centre stage where she stops and addresses the audience:

> Good sweet honey sugar candied friends, . . . I will test your patience with one small couplet that was made about me after my death by an erstwhile lover. It was writ upon my grave and if you go to the Abbey you will find it there still. It reads: 'Here lies proof that wit can never be/ Defence enough against morality.' (S3)

Behn's "sugary" salutation does not diffuse the eerieness of the setting, however, for the unsettling possibilities raised with the introduction of the "two-fold monster, moral opinion" are soon realized in the menacing figures of Moral Man and Moral Woman. Interpreting episodes from Behn's personal and professional life to suit its own bigoted ends, the Moral Monster embodies the repressive spirit that Maenad hopes to exorcise from Behn's past.

In its decision to reclaim Aphra Behn from the "garbage heap" (Scollard, Personal interview), Maenad followed the lead of other feminist theatre companies and playwrights who realized the suitability of historical drama to feminist production.[33] Helene

Keyssar notes,

> [F]eminist plays attempt to pay attention to the lives of women--as individuals, in relation to each other, and in relation to men. This often takes the form . . . of representing women who played important but forgotten roles in history or of retelling history from a female perspective. (3)

By adapting the conventions of historical drama to serve their own political and personal ends, theatre companies began to challenge the traditionally male-bound theatre space by revising and reclaiming historical drama in order to "inform the audience of the deeds and struggles of women who altered history and to sound the cry of women's voices, to break the silence too often characteristic of women's place in drama" (Keyssar 3).

In Aphra, Maenad adheres to the episodic structure of historical dramatic chronicle, ascribing to a format that foregoes the strictures of chronological time and stages only the events or circumstances pertinent to a particular re-telling of history. With Aphra, however, the particular re-telling is feminist and consequently, the episodes, which include carefully selected passages from Behn's *oeuvre*, events from her life, principles from her philosophy on love, marriage, and female independence, and a commentary on women and medicine in Restoration England, combine to reveal a complex image of this remarkable woman. While she was alive, Aphra Behn successfully resisted the social conventions that confined (and defined) women of her era. The "dream/fantasy/delirium" (Scollard, Personal interview) arrangement of Aphra's first act offers chronologically disparate episodes from Behn's life that work to foil the traditional patriarchal perception of Aphra Behn as wicked and immoral, and confirm the Maenadian perception of her as independent, strong-willed, and passionate.

Early in the play, standing centre stage--arms slightly outspread, palms forward, feet shoulder width apart--Aphra faces the audience. She is flanked by Moral Man and Moral Woman who discover her body is covered in "[p]aper cuts. She's lacerated with cuts that slice into her body. And each wound is splitting open to show different things" (S6). The "different things" are disparate episodes from Aphra's life, chosen from the "little myths and snippets of information" that Maenad unearthed in the process of creating the play. Each episode is purposefully presented in order to reveal the inadequacies of the patriarchal perception of Behn. From the wound that announces Aphra's birth, the Moral Monster extracts the code of conduct governing the lives of women in the mid-1600's, a code which Aphra chooses to resist rather than accommodate:

> Woman: As your mother I must instruct you how a married woman of your quality ought to live. . . . Beginning at eight and ending before twelve you ought to employ yourself in dressing.
> Young Aphra: Four hours to dress?
> Woman: Till two at dinner. Till five in visits. Till seven at the theatre. Till nine walking in the park. Ten, supper with your husband.
> Aphra: Or with your lover if your husband be not home.
> Woman: Fie! Don't put ideas in her head.
> Aphra: From ten till twelve are the happy hours, the Bergere, those of entire enjoyment.
> Young Aphra: And what must I do from twelve till eight again?
> Aphra: Oh those are the dull conjugal hours for sleeping with your own husband and dreaming of joys your absent lover alone can give.
> Young Aphra: And that's it? Is there nothing more to a

> woman's life than that?
> Woman: What more could you want? (S6)

Aphra's quips make clear her refusal to accept a stereotypical role, as do the myriad episodes included in the play which read something like an Indiana Jones movie script with the adventurous hero adopting a literary rather than archaeological bent. Representing Aphra as a woman of independence and courage, Maenad chooses episodes that epitomize her daring: she spies for King Charles II and spends time in prison for the debts she accrues in his service; she travels to Surinam in the still nascent years of exploration and travel; she openly rejects marriage (believing it is "as certain a bane to love as lending money is to friendship" (S8)); she writes bawdy Restoration comedy and what is possibly the first novel, proudly making her living by her pen.

On their own, these episodes have the power to ascertain the "truth" about Aphra Behn that Maenad wants to declare. However, by surrounding the episodes with the satiric commentary of Moral Man and Moral Woman, Maenad attempts to go beyond a feminist recovery of one historical figure in order to reveal the hypocrisies in the attitudes and opinions that haunt a woman's world now as then. Embracing the politic of change that Jill Dolan's coupling of materialist feminism and postmodernism contends, Aphra emphasizes that forms cannot be productively changed without an attendant change in ideology (15-16). Establishing a new vision of Aphra Behn sounds a hollow victory if the audience does not learn to recognize and question the repressive and oppressive forces that continue to shape women's lives.

As Moral Man and Moral Woman introduce and comment on scenes from Behn's life, they provide a traditional choral framework to the episodic structure of the play. However, the authority and reliability usually associated with the chorus figure is undermined by their satiric portrayal, allowing Maenad "to work within a dominant tradition . . . without being co-opted by it" (Hutcheon 1). Moral Man and Moral Woman become less a structural "vehicle for commenting on the play and for exposition to the audience concerning its subject" (Abrams 25) than a satiric vehicle designed to "diminish or derogate a subject [in this case patriarchal assumptions regarding women] by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (Abrams 166). In the careful outlining of how a woman ought to spend her day, for instance, Moral Woman ticks off each hour's required duties, creating an amusing image which confirms the monotony of such a life. Ironically, her nonchalant acceptance of the situation (revealed in her closing query) leads to thoughts of just how much more a woman *might* want. By emphasizing the absurdity of Moral Woman's notion of appropriate womanhood, Maenad uses "laughter as a weapon" (Abrams 166) to dismantle the authority of moral perception.

Moral Woman's conviction that a woman should be content with a tedious existence is humorously depicted, but the ideological basis of her assumptions regarding women is less amusing. The darkness of the satire becomes increasingly apparent throughout the play, revealing the "particularly political function" of humor in feminist production. Linda Hutcheon contends, "[W]omen writers have never underestimated the subversive and disruptive power of humour" (98); in Aphra, Scollard, Cullen, and Patience attempt to "subvert and disrupt" the power of moral opinion and its ability to repress female autonomy.

The incessant commentary offered by Moral Man and Moral Woman establishes familiarity between chorus and spectators. Nonetheless, the Moral Monster "evoke[s] the contempt, scorn, and indignation" of their "dear friends", not their sympathy or understanding. Moral Man and Moral Woman's amusing assessment of the audience, which derives its humor from its conspiratorial tone and its confident, but mistaken, assumptions about the audience's political position, darkens with Moral Man's ruthless description of Behn:

> Woman: If you came expecting instruction and enlightenment, you may as well go home right now.
> Man: You obviously have nothing better to do with your time and money or you wouldn't be here.
> Woman: You will no doubt be amused with what we are about to show you. But don't be disarmed. Don't allow your good judgement to be clouded over. For you will realize dear friends to what baleful depths womankind can sink.
> Man: It is our intention to show you scenes from the life and dramas of that scurrilous, opinionated, lecherous, unimaginably wicked maker of plays--Aphra. (S3)

If any humor survives Moral Man's description of Behn, it is in the obvious discrepancy between his words and the image of Aphra that has thus far been portrayed. Her inviting tone as she welcomes the audience to the play contrasts sharply with the Moral Monster's backhanded assumptions, and her straightforward condemnation of the "two-fold monster, moral opinion" is more appealing in its honesty than the hypocritical leering of Moral Man and Moral Woman as they attempt to disclose Behn's wickedness.

The effective use of satire in Aphra relies on Maenad's awareness of its audience's political bent. The transparent hypocrisies and absurd assertions of Moral Man and Moral Woman confirm the audience's common perception of patriarchal systems, creating a comfortable theatre space for the spectators in which their shared ability to recognize and "decode" the irony of the choral figures creates a "community of understanding" (Hutcheon 18). Rather than allow its audience to revel in the pleasure of having their feminist convictions affirmed, however, Scollard, Cullen, and Patience, twist the sharp edge of the satire even further, forcing the audience to question the ease with which they replaced the authority of moral opinion with their own assumptions. The "double forked tongue" (Hutcheon) of the satire illuminates the inadequacies of the repressive sensibilities that Moral Man and Moral Woman tout, but it also dupes the audience into assuming a similar position of moral superiority over the chorus.

In the closing scene, the inability of the spectators to respond to Moral Man and Moral Woman implies their complicity in Aphra's condemnation. Aphra seeks to be included in the gathering of poet-ghosts, but is offhandedly dismissed:

> Woman: Look she's going up to Chaucer.
> Man: He's the president of the assembly.
> Woman: He's saying something to her. She's giving him a really sour look. What's he saying?
> Man: He's telling her that none of her sex has any right to a seat there.
> Woman: I should think not.
> Man: Look she throws her eyes about to see if she can find any one who inclines to take her part.
> Woman: (Looking out to audience) Not one stirs. They're

shaking their heads. (S11)

The audience's silence, although both justifiably prompted by theatrical tradition and necessary to Maenad's desired effect, briefly creates an uncomfortable space in which the audience is made aware of the difficulties inherent in breaking traditions.

Throughout the play the spectators silently judge the societal pretensions that shape Moral Man and Moral Woman's attitudes and opinions regarding women, but when offered the opportunity to oppose the pretensions, they remain silent. Spectators leave the theatre bothered by the implications of the play, robbed of witnessing the traditional cathartic moment and experiencing its hopeful promise. Instead, they silently observe Aphra's continued struggle against patriarchy in the spirit world, are assured that moral opinion continues to shape women's lives today, and are nudged into considering their own response to the societal constraints placed on female autonomy. Maenad extends its re-visioning of Aphra Behn to encourage a re-visioning of female representation outside the theatre space.

The episodes from Behn's personal life enhance the Maenadic perception of Behn as a strong-willed and independent woman, but the inclusion of two scenes from Behn's The Widow Ranter contribute to her feminist representation by revealing the professional implications of her personal convictions regarding patriarchal expectations of women.[34] The excerpts from The Widow Ranter are introduced by Betty and Mary, Aphra's colleagues, who set up the controversy surrounding the moral acceptability of Restoration comedy at the time it was being written. Betty argues in favor of the libertine aesthetic climate which offered Behn and her contemporaries the opportunity to stage feisty and independent characters. Mary, on the other hand, questions the moral appropriateness of the "sexual licence" and "female intelligence" that Restoration theatre celebrated, confirming the repressive and authoritarian social, as opposed to artistic, mores of the period (Munns 202). The Widow Ranter provides a representative, uncensored glimpse of the material that Betty condones and Mary condemns.

As the representative of moral opinion, Mary finds the "indecency" of Behn's comedy in "hardy, bold, passionate, aggressive" (S11) representations of women--of whom the ebullient Widow Ranter is no exception. The Widow's declarations concerning love and marriage and her forthright veneration of distinctly unfeminine habits and customs (drinking, smoking, duelling, wearing "britches") combine to create a shocking figure for Restoration theatre's critics.[35] However, the unorthodox depictions of women which shocked Behn's detractors garnered the applause of her fellow playwrights, who were creating similarly independent women for the stage. Jessica Munns cites William Wycherley's The Country Wife, Thomas Otway's Friendship in Fashion, Edward Ravenscroft's The London Cuckolds, Sedley's Bellamira, and Tom Durfey's A Fool's Predicament as plays, like Behn's, that overwhelmed their critics with "image[s] of womanhood . . . they did not want to see" (Munns 204).

Maenad's carefully selected excerpts from The Widow Ranter focus Betty and Mary's debate on gender reversal, a representational strategy that lends itself to the passionate, intelligent, and witty portrayals of women that dominate Restoration comedy. Gender reversals had traditionally been used in

> romance or romantic comedy . . . to break down the basic courtship motif--active men intriguing for passive women--by exploiting the role's potential for comic or pathetic effects: a woman dons breeches to escape guardian or unwanted suitor and finds herself in dangerous or ridiculous situations. (Kavenik 181)

As the argument between Mary and Betty shows, however, the Widow Ranter's "breeches part" deviates from traditional expectation:

> Mary: [T]he Widow's a departure isn't she? With her britches I mean and those manly ways.
> Betty: Women ape men on the stage all the time.
> Mary: Indeed but in other plays women pass as men for reasons of necessity or intrigue. The widow plays a man because . . . she likes it.
> Betty: Does she now?
> Mary: She is definitely a departure. (S4)

The Widow takes great delight in drinking, smoking, and dressing like a man--acts typically barred from a woman's domain. She encourages Mistress Surelove, a friend who fulfils more conventional expectations of women, to experience the headiness of drink (symbolically encouraging her to experience the headiness of independence):

> Punch! Tis my Morning's draught, my table drink, my treat, my regalio, my everything! And my dear Surelove if thou would but refresh and cheer thy heart with punch in a morning thou would not look thus cloudy all the day. (S4)

The Widow later observes, "We all smoke here. 'Tis a part of good breeding" (S4), and she dresses daily in men's "breeches". Her casual acceptance of seemingly masculine delights begs the questioning of imposed gender roles. Along with her male contemporaries, Behn "delight[ed] in pointing out that it was custom/hypocrisy and not Nature or truth which prescribed female modesty" (Munns 202). She manipulates traditional gender reversal to propose the possibility of female autonomy rather than to reinforce female passivity.

As pointed out, Aphra Behn does not innovate roles for women with her independent, intelligent, and witty representations; rather "[i]t is undoubtedly true that Behn *does* write like other (male) Restoration dramatists in terms of her genres, styles, plot materials, and topics" (Munns 198). Maenad concurs with this assessment, but they also suggest that she subverts the traditional context of the Restoration play through her political ideas (Cullen, Personal interview). As a *woman* playwright aware of the limitations imposed on women, she goes beyond her male counterpart's explorations of female autonomy, which often focus on the titillating rewards that female independence and freer forms of human sexuality promise masculine desires, to draw attention to the social implications of female independence. Munns states,

> [F]or all their conventionality and topicality, Behn's plays are not the mere products of gender reversal. Behn rarely loses sight of the difference between men's and women's experiences as they struggle for their goals. Less concerned than a man with onslaughts on phallic supremacy, Behn is more aware of the realities of the womb and the social consequences of male supremacy. (199)

The wit, sexual innuendo, and untroubled response to widowhood that shape the Widow Ranter's exuberant appreciation of her husband's "timely" death, for instance, comply with the thematic and representational traditions of Restoration theatre, but the excerpt reveals Behn's departures from, as well as her adherence to, Restoration theatrical convention. The Widow Ranter subverts the traditional form through Behn's careful attention to the social implications of female autonomy. The social reality of a woman's financial dependence on her husband is implicit in the Widow's words as is the frustration and humiliation of an unhappy marriage:

> Surelove: I have reason, Madam, to be melancholy. I have received a letter from my husband in England who tells me the doctors can do no good on him. I fear I shall see him no more.
> Ranter: Good news! I don't know how you put up with him for so long! An old rusty weather beaten skeleton, as dried as stock fish and much of the hue. Come, come. Here's to the next. May he be young, heaven I beseech thee.
> Surelove: You have reason to praise an old man, who died and left you worth fifty thousand pounds.
> Ranter: Ay gad and what's better, died in good time and left me young enough to spend his fifty thousands pounds in better company--rest his soul for that too. (S4)

Widow Ranter's laughing response to her husband's death veils the barbs of Behn's political comment which expose the reality regarding a woman's limited choices.

As Mary and Betty debate the appropriateness of female representation in The Widow Ranter, their own disparate representations in Aphra are emphasized. Like Ruth and Hester in Still Stands the House or Jasmine and Alice in The Lodge, female characters are represented in opposition to one another. Mary is represented as a woman who adheres to patriarchal expectations of women and conflates her own ideas and beliefs with her husband's. When Betty asks her why she disapproves of The Widow Ranter she replies, "Tom [her husband] believes that the stage is not the proper place to air political views" (S4). Upon further castigation, she declares, "Tom thinks women on the stage have enough trouble protecting their good name" (S4). In each instance, Mary (like Ruth in Still Stands the House) defends her impression of the Widow Ranter with her husband's arguments, not her own. Her inability to articulate an autonomous response to Betty's accusations reveals the extent to which patriarchal notions of women have influenced her life. Betty, on the other hand, is represented as a woman who defies patriarchal expectations of women. Her coarse language, professional independence, and lack of respect for patriarchal authority contribute to her representation as a confident and self-aware woman. She confronts Betty,

> What harm is there in this poor play, apart from the proposal that those who run things are fools and charlatans?
> Mary: It's more a question of good taste than politics.
> Betty: Good what? Ah, we're getting back to the widow are we? You don't like her swaggering ways.
> Mary: Well really Betty. All that drinking and smoking.
> Betty: All that initiative.
> Mary: Exactly. It's most unseemly.
> Betty: Oh God. Tighten your stays and button your lip. There's a bonafide woman in the house. . . . Tom's an arse licker and you're a prig. (S4)

Betty's boisterous mockery of Mary's conservativism endears her to feminist spectators. She, like Aphra, provides the audience with a female character who refuses the conventional confines of the "male gaze." Contrary to representations of women in more traditional theatre in which "[p]erformance usually addresses the male spectator as an active subject" and "objectif[ies] women performer and female spectators as passive, invisible, unspoken subjects" (Dolan 2), Aphra and Betty allow feminist spectators a "comfortable way into the representation" (Dolan 2).

In spite of their differences, Mary and Betty are friends, and herein the disparate representations of Betty and Mary differ sharply from the polar representations of Ruth and Hester or Alice and Jasmine.[36] As Betty and Mary interact with one another and with Aphra, a female community of support and friendship emerges. Mary is unable to help Aphra by challenging her husband's perception of Aphra's work, but she does gently and compassionately attend to her friend's health:

> (Mary Betterton comes in with a mug of chocolate. She fusses over Aphra)
> Mary: I've arranged with Mrs. Bulker to light a little fire for you morning and evening. Only you must try to keep your shawl about you. And not sit in the draft of the window. . . . I should go. You must rest.
> Aphra: No don't. You know I like my friends about me when I work. It's a warmth better than any fire or hot toddy.
> Mary: Oh Aphra. (She embraces Aphra tearfully) (S3)

Similarily, Betty brings Aphra "[a] little pie, some bread . . . and ale from Will's" and tells her friends she's "come to put some colour into this grey tub" (S3). The camaraderie that defines the women's friendships exceeds the boundaries of their personal philosophies, foreshadowing the notion of acceptance and understanding that shapes feminist thought three centuries later.

As Aphra interacts with Mary and Betty, her reliance on their friendship somewhat obscures her independence; but her interactions with Moral Man and Moral Woman contribute to her representation as a self-aware woman who confidently asserts her own artistic and personal ideology even when threatened by the Moral Machine. Her honest answers to the Moral Monster's accusations assert her awareness of the social restrictions placed on women, reinforcing the Maenadic perception of Behn as proto-feminist:

> Woman: You blasphemed the sacred temple marriage.
> Aphra: Marriage is as certain a bane to love as lending money is to friendship.
> Woman: Your plays are lewd and wicked.
> Aphra: That is the most unjust and silly aspersion woman could invent to pass on woman--that it is Bawdy--the least and most excusable fault in the men writers to whose plays you all crowd. . . .
> Man: A woman belongs in the home not in the market place.
> Aphra: I'm forced to write for bread and not ashamed to own it.
> Woman: Your life is scarcely exemplary. All those lovers.
> Aphra: I wish only there had been more. Who can be happy without love? For me, I never numbered those dull days amongst those of my life, in which I had not my soul filled with that soft passion. (S8)

As the characters in Aphra interact, the varying degrees of self-awareness that they possess is made apparent. But none of the characters fulfil Keyssar's theory of transformation by experiencing a "moment of self-recognition" or moving towards a "recognition of others" (Keyssar xiv) within the play. Even when Betty and Mary assume the roles of Widow Ranter and Mistress Surelove (a circumstance that lends itself to consider the implications of role play and representation), their interactions simply confirm the disparate representations that are set up in the play proper. As the Widow, Betty remains independent and feisty; as Surelove, Mary remains dependent and "simpery." The Moral Man and Moral Woman, as symbolic embodiments of the patriarchy throughout time, are not meant to be transformed by Aphra's pleadings, and Aphra and Betty, women aware of the societal expectations that govern a woman's world, maintain their independence from beginning to end. Representations are consistent, differences between characters are obvious and direct. Jill Dolan worries that the stability of these types of representations dominates plays that reclaim women's history and risk "flattening women's experience" by leaving "no room for questioning, doubt, or debate" (88). However, the more literal "transformations" of Mary and Betty into either the Moral Monster or the Quack and his assistant in Aphra serve to diffuse Dolan's concern by complicating the representations and challenging theatrical tradition that favors character consistency and coherence.

The scenes in which Betty and Mary become the Moral Man and Moral Woman are disconcerting and eerie. In the first act, transformations are not cued by dimmed lights, freezes, music, or other transitional devices; rather, the characters simply become other people and because these are so different from whom they were, the sentiments evoked in the audience are confusing in their incongruity. The first transformation occurs shortly after Betty and Mary arrive at Aphra's writing room. They comfort and cheer her; they bring her food; they take care of her. The intimacy of their friendship permeates the scene. But then Mary and Betty transform:

> Aphra: Behind me are my friends, a gay rabble gathered together not to roar but certainly to rant a little, tantivy and merry. Laughter and tuberose and teasing surround me. . . . But let's journey a little towards friendship and understanding . . .
> (As Aphra speaks, Mary and Betty squabbling transform into the Moral Monster)
> Woman: That's enough of that, now.
> Aphra: Enough of what?
> Woman: Enough of that endless babble. Women should be seen and not heard. (Woman puts hand over Aphra's mouth) Am I right, my lord?

> Man: Absolutely. And they should be obscene and not heard too. (Man reaches round and cups Aphra's breast jiggling it a little) (S6)

The hands that had "embraced" and "fussed over Aphra" only moments before, silence and molest her. The women who were her friends are now her enemies. As the Quack and his assistant, the actors who play Mary and Betty again threaten, rather than protect, their friend:

> Quack: We win, my pretty one. You belong to me now. (He makes nasty advances to her) . . . You're dead and in my power at last.
> Aphra: No! Never! I'll never yield!
> (Struggle ensues. At first the figures struggle with her and berate her but they turn into Betty and Mary trying to soothe and calm her)
> Mary [as Quack]: Harlot!
> Betty [as Assistant]: Bitch!
> Aphra: No! Give me that pen!
> Mary: Aphra! Calm yourself!
> Betty: Affy! Affy! Don't you know me? (S8)

The actors fluidly alter their identities, fragmenting any coherent sense of character. Spectators who had found a "comfortable entry into the representation" through Betty's independence or the community of friendship surrounding Betty, Mary, and Aphra, find their contentment disrupted by an inability to discern between characters who are fundamentally opposed (as both supportive and condemnatory). Spectators are encouraged to contemplate the relationship between Betty and Mary and the Moral Man and Moral Woman in order to alleviate their uneasiness, fulfilling Jill Dolan's assertion that feminist drama must lead the audience "to question the interactions and relationships played out in the representational space" (106).

By re-examining Aphra Behn's history and arguing their own alternative to the patriarchal perception of Behn as wicked and lewd, Scollard, Cullen and Patience create a play that questions conventional representations of womanhood and femininity. However, they do not only *replace* the patriarchal images of Behn with "new and improved" feminist representations; they also invite the audience to *assess* critically the power structures and constructed roles imposed on women, even the literary ones. By focusing on Behn's artistic self, Maenad tampers with canonic expectations of greatness, showing audiences that no matter how open they may be to change, it is often difficult to challenge the traditions that shape a woman's world. Unlike Ringwood, Glass, and Pollock, Maenad's acknowledged political feminist intent goes beyond the creation of complex female characters in order to encourage its audiences to "step out of the roles that society create[s]" (Scollard, Personal interview).

*****

When I undertook this project as a naive but enthusiastic student of drama, I initially wondered if the increasingly feminist representations of women in prairie drama from the 1930's to the present would manifest itself in fewer and fewer stereotypical depictions of women. My musings were allowed little time to grow, however, for I soon realized that orthodox as well as unorthodox depictions of women were necessary in dramatizing authentic female stories. In Gwen Ringwood's Still Stands the House, the stereotypical depictions of Ruth and Hester ensure that the oppressive conditions governing a woman's world on the prairies in the 1930's are not forgotten. In The Lodge, written almost four decades later, Ringwood acknowledges the social changes that allow women greater independence and freedom through Shelley and Jasmine, but she does not ignore the forces that continue to oppress women like Connie and Alice. Similarly, Bob in Sharon Pollock's Doc and Ruth in Joanna Glass's Play Memory are stereotypical representations of women, but they succeed in opening to public scrutiny the often hidden stories of abuse and violence that haunt many women's lives. Even in Maenad's Aphra, a play that leaps ahead from the other plays I examine in subject matter as well as form, includes Mary, a stereotypically dependent and conservative female character who touts her husband's views rather than her own. However, the disparate handlings of representational strategies--images of entrapment, character interaction, dramatic structure--change the ways that these stereotypical depictions of women contribute to the increasingly feminist concerns in each play.

As a play written before the resurgence of the North American feminist movement of the late 1960's, Gwen Ringwood's Still Stands the House provides a starting point from which to gauge the increasingly feminist representations of women in prairie drama. In this play, the prairie environment entraps Ruth and Hester in the same way that domesticity entraps Alice and Connie in The Lodge, Bob in Doc, and Ruth in Play Memory. In Still Stands the House, however, the link between the entrapment images and the patriarchal forces they represent is somewhat obscured by Ruth and Hester's inability to associate their entrapment with their position as women. In The Lodge, Doc, and Play Memory, Connie, Shelley, Jasmine, Bob, Catherine, and Jean are each aware of the patriarchal forces that work to entrap them. Whether the images of entrapment are manifest in the hunted cougar and environmental consumerism of The Lodge or the fragmented memory structures of Doc and Play Memory, the move toward a more pointed social commentary on patriarchal oppression is clearly discernible.

The polar representations of Ruth and Hester in Still Stands the House deny the possibility of complex representations and female friendship, and the naturalistic structure of the play reinforces the women's experiences of oppression rather than liberation. In the latter group of plays, however, character interaction and dramatic structure revolve around psychological and emotional interaction, allowing the women character's to voice their convictions while revealing the complexity of their situations. The traditional representations of Alice and Connie in The Lodge, Bob in Doc, and Ruth in Play Memory are juxtaposed with the independent and autonomous representations of Shelley and Jasmine, Catherine, and Jean, who simultaneously offer alternative ways of being a woman and move toward a greater understanding of the "entrapped" women.

To me, it seems that Aphra breaks radically from the memory plays in both subject and form as prairie drama moves toward increasingly feminist representations of women. Even though the fragmented structure of Doc and Play Memory resonates through Aphra's episodic format, the psychological and emotional worlds that the earlier plays explore are replaced in Aphra by a professional milieu. Unlike its precursors, Aphra moves away from, the "personal" as defined in the memory plays. In Aphra the "personal" centres on her professional, artistic world, the world of a writer. Unlike the women in the other plays I examine, neither Aphra, Mary, nor Betty function within the domestic sphere. As a playwright, Aphra faces the conservative demands of her detractors; as female actors, Mary and Betty are accused of impropriety, but at no time does the domestic intervene. I am not insistenting that there is a specific direction that feminist theatre is taking or needs to take, but Aphra suggests the importance of including a world with a broader dimension, a more encompassing vision than the domestic.

Through this study I have shown that a number of prairie women playwrights are challenging the conservative and stereotypical representations that dominate the traditional dramatic canon. But in each play I examine the playwrights share a commitment to articulating the particular struggles faced by women in patriarchal society. Slowly, but surely, the "invisible" women in Canadian drama is being replaced by women who "think, dream, desire, breathe" and write without permission.

NOTES

1. Uneasy Pieces is comprised of three one-act companion plays: Nosey Parkers, Swapper, and The Hero. Nosy Parkers was produced at the Edmonton Fringe Festival two months prior to the production of all three plays at Theatre Network in 1985.

2. I think Lynne Van Luven had a similar inclination in her Ph. D. thesis, Charting the Territory, in which she traces the development of feminist drama in Canada from the 1960's onward. Her study assesses 25 plays by 21 women playwrights. (She also includes four plays be male playwrights.)

3. At a lecture presented at the May 1978 Conference of Inter-American Women Writers in Ottawa, Ringwood refers to Gowan as "one of the few liberated women I knew in the thirties. . . . She early accepted and understood the role of adult women at a time when most of us were content to remain girls for a long time" (Women 155). As her own awareness of women's position in a patriarchal society grew, however, Ringwood no longer shirked her "responsibility" as a woman playwright.

4. This idea is persistently reiterated in feminist theatre criticism. Helene Keyssar asserts that the "persistent inclination of feminist dramatists" is to "diverge significantly from conventional realism" (xii); Jill Dolan contends, "Realist theatre imposes a conservative sense of order by delivering its ideology as normative" (106); Janet Brown wonders if there is a "distinctly female narrative structure" (3); Sue-Ellen Case claims that realism is "unsuited" to feminist drama and encourages an "elliptical" form (129).

5. Ross Stuart refers to the years from 1907-1925 as the "period of the great tours in Western Canada" (50). Many reasons are cited for plunging profits and prestige experienced by travelling professionals in the 1920's: the depression, the increasing popularity of radio and film, and performances "that . . . were so poor they alienated audiences" (Stuart 77). But the immediate and spirited return of community theatre that succeeded the travelling professionals suggests that these factors, which should have also affected the popularity of amateur live theatre, deny the inherent limitations of travelling professionals. Unlike its amateur counterpart, touring theatre showed little interest in the circumstances of the prairie pioneer. Perhaps understandably, actors "rarely became interested in the towns they visited or the people they met because they saw so many and moved so often" (Stuart 53), and as professional companies with mandates to produce proven successes, they "never encouraged indigenous playwriting" (Stuart 78). Ross Stuart links the decline of travelling professional theatre with the growing awareness that prairie theatre needed to come from the prairie community: "Above all, the tours were from somewhere else. They were always passing through.

For prairie theatre to develop roots, it had to begin again, at home" (78).

6. CBC Radio, with its mandate to encourage Canadian culture, became the stage for many indigenous playwrights, regularly commissioning and producing the works of fledgling prairie playwrights when stage productions were virtually impossible to obtain. CKUA radio in Edmonton, Alberta served a similar function. Howard Fink's article "CKUA: Radio Drama and Regional Theatre" published in Theatre History in Canada 8.2. (Fall 1987) discusses the unique role that CKUA played in the development of prairie theatre.

7. Female roles are central to some traditional drama--Shaw, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Strindberg--but I believe these are exceptions to the rule. Janet Brown contends, "Simply by moving to center stage those who traditionally have been minor characters or offstage altogether, a feminist drama teaches the audience, glorifying the women patriarchal society has defined as marginal" (13).

8. Still Stands The House appears in (at least) ten different publications: The Carolina Playbook, v. 11, no.2 June, 1938. American Folk Plays ed. F. H. Koch, N.Y.: Appleton-century, 1939. Argosy to Adventure, ed. C.L. Bennett, Toronto: Ryerson, 1950. 1955 Eight One Act Plays, Toronto: Dent, 1966. Encounter: Canadian Drama in Four Media, ed. Eugene Benson. Toronto: Methuen, 1973. The Prairie Experience, ed. Terry Angus. Toronto: MacMillan, 1975. Transitions I: Short Plays, ed. Edward Peak. Vancouver: Commcept Publishing, 1978. Literature in Canada, eds. Douglas Daymond et al. v. 2, Toronto: Gage, 1978. Panorama. ed. Theresa M. Ford, Edmonton Alberta Education, 1979. Collected Plays of Gwen Pharis Ringwood ed. Enid Delgatty Rutland, Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1982.

9. Still Stands the House is a melodrama, and the extreme contrasts in Hester and Ruth's representations are a function of this form. In his definition of melodrama, M. H. Abrams states "The protagonists are flat types; the hero and heroine as pure as the driven snow and the villain a monster of malignity" (99). Nonetheless, the flat representations also function to perpetuate stereotypical assumptions regarding women.

10. In her essay "Modern Prairie Drama in its Literary Contexts," Diane Bessai points out the similarities and differences between prairie fiction and prairie drama in their handling of the pioneer woman's growing discontent with the harshness of prairie life.

11. An excellent example of the changes that Ringwood's female characters undergo is seen in her 1945 re-write of the 1939 play Pasque Flowers. In the full-length revision, Dark Harvest, Lisa Hansen is a much more vital, independent, and aware young woman

than in the 1939 version.

12. Robin Daravalley also defies patriarchal definitions of male roles. Unlike Roland and Eardley, he detests hunting and environmental exploitation. Himself an artist, he understands Shelley's need for artistic expression and fears she has lost her freedom with Allan. His concern is heartfelt, although proven later to be misplaced.

13. While the relationship between Shelly and Jasmine (and to a lesser degree Shelley and Marybelle) present the audience with moments of female friendship, the representation of Alice serves as reminder of the continued inability of many women to "provide feminist support." As she interacts with her mother, daughter, and sister, Alice's complicity in perpetuating patriarchal expectations of women denies the possibility of female intimacy.

14. In her later works, Ringwood does experiment with innovative dramatic forms, but the majority of her drama continues to adhere to realistic conventions of regional theatre that seem more suitable to the small community audiences and coffee shop venues for which she wrote. She remembers "the sweat running down her brow" after reading Ionesco's The Chairs. The experience "set [her] on a journey in which [she] found out about Sartre, Brecht, Beckett, Genet" (Stage Voices 97). The plays left her "shaken, bewildered, somewhat aghast" but they also inspired her to write an anti-theatre play. She experimented with less traditional dramatic structures several times late in her career with The Deep Has Many Voices, Mirage and The Carpenter Ants (unfinished), but she did not entirely abandon the realist conventions of regional theatre. The Garage Sale, The Lodge, and A Remembrance of Miracles were all realist plays written in the late 70's or early 80's.

15. Professional theatre did not replace amateur theatre, which continued to operate after the establishment of larger theatre houses; however, it did provide opportunities for the more talented theatre artists to continue outside of the realm of the amateur into the world of the professional.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre	1958	Winnipeg
Theatre Calgary	1965	Calgary
The Citadel Theatre	1965	Edmonton
The Globe Theatre	1966	Regina
25th Street Theatre	1972	Saskatoon

16. On a broader scale the statistics are not as discouraging. When all 114 theatres that comprise her survey are included "an average of 50% of the plays produced . . . were written by Canadian playwrights" (120).

17. Alternative theatre companies and smaller professional companies have traditionally extended a friendlier welcome to political works. But the ability to freely voice your political concerns is often linked with an inability to make a living from your work. Hollingsworth acknowledges this conflict:

> [A] woman who wants to write a play from even a mildly feminist perspective . . . must either work within the system and take her play to an established theatre (in which case she will probably have written a historical drama which is almost entirely unthreatening . . .) or she will decide to work outside the system . . . The small fringe theatres are often . . . more open to women's work, but there's no money for the playwright, and no real resources to develop or produce a play that is at all ambitious in terms of cast or structure. (25-26)

18. Children's theatre seems to be a more accessible venue for women playwrights. Fraticelli's study sub-divides the theatres she surveys; in theatre for youth she found a much healthier climate for women theatre artists even though parity with male counterparts was still not achieved:

> Whether it is because of this low status, the commensurate budgets, or whether it stems from the traditional association of women with children, the employment of women at children's theatres is much higher than the national average. At 41 theatre studied over the same three year period [1978-1981], 25% of the productions were written by women and 30% directed by women. This represents an employment rate which is approximately twice what women experience in theatre in general and more than three times their rate of employment in the Group of 18. (119)

19. In the 1983 version of the play which is published in Jerry Wasserman's anthology Modern Canadian Plays Pretty Plume's role is expanded. Her presence at a meeting with General Terry establishes the respect the Sioux have for matriarchal leadership. However the difference between her representation here and in the previous version is insignificant; the potential she has to explode the conventional notions regarding patriarchal systems that Pollock is criticizing is never fulfilled. Pretty Plume's dismissal by General Terry, who refuses to negotiate with a woman, is neither explained nor explored.

20. Betty Mitchell, like Elizabeth Sterling Haynes, contributed a great deal to the development of theatre in the prairies. In her position as director of drama at Western Canada High School in Calgary she led her students' drama club to be "one of the two best amateur companies in Canada" (Stuart 107). When these students sought further acting involvement and direction she founded Workshop 14.

21. Artichoke retained the prairie setting of the earlier version even though the first account was dismissed because of "its Canadian farm family story" (Bessai, "Biocritical Essay" xi).

22. In my discussion of Doc and Play Memory I do not mean to suggest that the "personal as political" slogan offers the only means for feminist representation. On the contrary, I recognize, along with Helene Keyssar, the risk in focussing solely on the personal: "The obvious danger in this emphasis on the personal, confessional resources of feminist drama is that it bcomes too idiosyncratic or simply too constrained by the particual life experiences of a few playwrights (5). However, I also believe the ability to *recognize* the personal as political is a necessary step toward achieving a more fully integrated feminist vision. Pollock does not ignore larger political issues after the writing of Doc, but in subsequent plays women are no longer flat or symbolic representations. Glass, who asserts the "apoliticalness" of theatre, nonetheless draws attention to the issue of family violence from a woman's perspective in Play Memory.

23. Bob's desperation is heightened by her inability to confide in any one other than Oscar. Oscar's support is sincere and substantial, but his position is complicated by his friendship with Ev and his love for Bob. Even if these obstacles did not exist, his understanding of Bob's situation is limited by his male perspective.

24. Pollock's contention that "As a playwright [she has] very little interest in writing naturalistic plays that take place in box sets with a unified time span" ("Blood" 123) refers not only to the plays, beginning with Blood Relations, that focus on "feminine individuality" but also to her earlier political works in which underdeveloped female roles prevail. This eliminates a causal link between Pollock's emerging awareness of accurate and detailed political female representation and the dramatic structure of her plays, but does not deny the appropriateness of the fragmented memory narrative in addressing the feminist thematic and subjective concerns of Doc.

25. The description of Jean before she first speaks emphasizes her stability: "She is dignified and assured. She is not lofty or preachy or grudge-bearing. One feels that she has achieved a healthy perspective on her past" (6).

26. On stage the split-self is emphasized by the different actors playing Katie and Catherine. In Play Memory Jean has come to terms with her past and therefore a separate "self" need not exist as a child. Jean herself can step into the child role because the "union" of the split character has already occurred. Using the adult Jean to play herself as a child works wonderfully as a metaphor for the union of past and present selves, but it does limit casting options. A smaller woman can more readily assume the role of the "child" Jean than a larger woman in scenes where the "child" is picked up by Cam or is sitting close to him as they recite poetry together.

27. Kenneth Brown notes the amazing surge in Canadian writing that accompanied the alternative movement: "Canadian dramatists, given theatres that were willing to produce their work, wrote more plays in ten years [1969-1979] than Canadians had written in the nation's history" (3).

28. Other cities that have adapted Edmonton Fringe tactics to their summer festival celebrations include Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Vancouver.

29. Rina Fraticelli's 1982 study of the status of women in Canadian theatre, ominously but appropriately entitled "The Invisibility Factor", reveals startling statistics concerning the status of women in professional theatre. Fraticelli found that "the worst offenders in terms of the employment of women are to be found among that group of theatres which receives the highest level of Canada Council subsidization" (119). The "Group of 18" theatres that she surveyed for these statistics were, for the most part, large regional theatre companies. She notes that the Globe Theatre (Regina) and The Manitoba Theatre Centre "produced no plays written by women between 1978 and 1981" and Theatre Calgary "hired not a single woman director [in the same time period]" (120). Fraticelli's survey does not delve into the reasons why women in professional theatre find it so difficult to find employment, but the conservative reputation of most professional theatres suggests that women are producing innovative work that is not considered acceptable for these venues. Evidence that women are committed to woman-centred or feminist theatre is demonstrated in Diane Bessai's 1985 article "Women, Feminism and Prairie Theatre." Bessai discusses the female, although not always feminist, mandate of nineteen (then) current playwrights, companies, productions and arts organizations. Through small stages that maintain their alternative commitments and Fringe festivals that are committed to theatrical innovations women theatre artists continue the struggle to become "visible".

30. Maenad embraces a philosophy of self-reliance. When they began to create theatre they took steps to produce it themselves. The spirit of their drive is revealed in comments made by Patience and Cullen on self-production:

> Patience: You shouldn't have to feel like you have to have permission to do something. You don't need that permission. You have to take it yourself and say, "Why do I think someone else is going to create the kind of theatre I want?" It's so stupid. So, you do it yourself.
>
> Cullen: The concept of developing a feminine consciousness in theatre--a really female consciousness in theatre--don't wait! You'll wait a long time. Start making it. Then they listen and then "they" will listen.

31. The time and energy expended on Aphra led to the replacement of Coasting to Brownsville (which was to be Scollard's only independently written work that season) with a remount of Tango Noir, accompanied by its companion piece Bete Blanche.

32. When the collective writing was complete, each participant acknowledged the challenges they had encountered. Patience describes the procedure as "an ongoing, very, very difficult process" ("Maenadic" 32); Scollard admits "I found it quite difficult and I don't think I'd like to do it again unless I'd be funded" (Personal interview); and Cullen remembers, "Pulling all the threads together to make them work into one piece was sometimes quite challenging because we think in different terms" (Personal interview). Their comments reflect oft-cited reasons for the now infrequent appearance of company scripts. Helene Keyssar reiterates Maenad's comments, suggesting large collectives are being replaced by other forms of collaborative writing because "they are exhaustive of time, money and energy" (6). Renate Usmiani believes the legacy of collective writing lies in its "subtle influence on subsequent dramatic development through its emphasis on the role of the actor, and on the generally co-operative, as opposed to hierarchical, nature of any theatrical effort" (5).

33. Rose Scollard humorously recounts her belief that most artists have an innate need to do at least one historical reclamation. She says,

> I remember reading a story by Alice Munro. She'd written something about an historical figure and she considered that she'd retrieved her one person from the dust heap. I think there's a bit of that in all of us--we want to do a little retrieving of these people. (Personal interview)

Two of the plays I had originally intended to examine also retrieve and reclaim the lives of historical women: Wendy Lill's The Fighting Days and Sharon Stearns and Tanya Ryga's Sarah and Gabriel.

34. Scollard, Cullen, and Patience successfully capture Behn's *joie de vivre* through a scattering of short quips from her prefaces, plays, and songs, but it is in the extended passages from The Widow Ranter that they constructively challenge the conservative ideology that barricades Behn (and her contemporaries) from theatrical repertory subsequent to the Restoration period.

35. It must be remembered that the critics were seldom Restoration theatre-goers. While reading reviews of Behn's work, Alexandria Patience realized that the discrepancies between the play and the reviews was so great it suggested critics must be reviewing a play they had neither seen or read: "Some of the critics give scathing reviews of Aphra Behn's work. Then you realize they haven't read them [her plays] because they're so disgustingly lewd that a woman shouldn't write it" (Personal interview).

36. Female friendships in The Lodge link women who share common philosophical beliefs. Betty and Mary imply a different kind of friendship in their ability to be friends in spite of their differences. While Jasmine may be able to be friends with women who do not share her beliefs, Alice definitely is not.

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Appendix A

Interview with Nancy Cullen and Alexandria Patience
May 1991

T.A. Let's start at the beginning. How did Maenad get started?

N.C. The first show we did was a fringe show which we took to Edmonton. It was actually a branching off of Rose's [Scollard] Uneasy Pieces. The two pieces that we took to the Fringe the first year were still "uneasy pieces", but were called Metamorphoses I and II. Then we kind of let it slide until the next year when we thought, "Well, we'll do another fringe show". That was our intention when we did our first fringe production, we thought let's do another one. From there it became a little more formal.

A.P. Actually I blackmailed Nancy. I said, "Yes, I'll direct your play [The Waitresses] but we need a stage manager for another and I hear you've done stage managing. So you'll have to stage manage this other play [Nosey Parkers]." I tortured her into it and that's what we did! We did two shows at the Fringe that year. That was 1988.

T.A. Tell me about the other women involved in the founding of the group.

N.C. I got involved in the summer of 1988.

A.P. Sandra MacNeill directed Metamorphoses and she is still directing. Barbara Campbell-Brown was there for Metamorphoses and then she moved to Montreal. She's back now with Maenad. Dawn Davies is now with Nakai Players in the north.

T.A. So what is your operating procedure? I understand you have a board of directors.

N.C. We have the formal positions on the board. I sit on the board as a member of the artistic committee. But it's still a fairly *loose* board; we try to make all of our decisions by consensus. We have the formal positions because in terms of paperwork we need it and it helps to divide the tasks. At times we just need somebody that can do the accounting or other things. Then we have committees within the Board. We're still sort of struggling with our Board; it's still developing; we're still learning how to do a lot of this. But we do have a set-up, and we just have to get things happening now: some committees for promotion, a committee for fundraising and finances, an artistic committee.

T.A. So there is only one person from the artistic community who is on the Board.

N.C. Yes. But there's another woman on the Board who will ultimately be moving into artistic work with the company. Again, it's rather loose. We do want to keep a connection with the Board and the Board is happy having a connection with the artistic committee. We have the Board's support because you need that support to work as a theatre company. We need people pushing us in the business community through their private networks so we can reach all kinds of people.

T.A. Then your Board provides some basis for funding. Where do you receive funding from?

A.P. We have been funded in the past by the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts, which of course is now virtually defunct because Alberta Culture has stepped in and taken over that area. The government wants their hands on the money. They want control over who gets it. Actually this year we've just been awarded some money from CRAF (Calgary Regional Arts Foundation), a city foundation.

N.C. It's not very much, but for us it's a step because it will pay for the rental of the theatre for our first show of next season. What we can do is ensure that some of the money from that first show is then put towards the rental for the next show and then the next show. . . It means that hopefully each of the shows that happens next year will have that kind of safety net there.

T.A. Do you receive any funding outside of unpredictable grants?

N.C. Us. Just us. Our own money. We would put enough money in to make the show happen and then the money that came in would cover the large costs. We would do shows on a very low budget.

A.P. Teeny, I mean teeny! We spent less than $300.00 producing Aphra. That's not including rental of the theatre. With the theatre, our costs comes to $1200, but for actual production costs, . . .

N.C. Well of course it depends on what you describe as production costs. That doesn't include things like mail out postage, paper . . . those kinds of expenses.

A.P. If we were to estimate for the full production, we could probably produce a play for $2000, including rent. . . . We're quite open about the fact that we don't have lots of money. We don't like big budgets or have big budgets. I don't know, maybe we would like them! (Laughter) But we don't have these things and we still create theatre.

T.A. So the plays you write take into account the specific financial restrictions placed on the company?

A.P. Yes, we wrote Aphra for the Pumphouse, for that location. We salvaged pretty well the whole set that we used from the opera because they were throwing stuff out.

A.P. So I had the set. It was like, "These are the things we have, so this is what's going on the set."

N.C. And it worked beautifully!

A.P. A lot of the things we've had to learn aren't things we're particularly adept at.

N.C. Asking people for things . . .

A.P. Yes, asking people for things. I've got pretty good at that.

N.C. She's our magpie.

A.P. I have to have support though. It's funny. I've become good at asking for things but I always need a back-up. I always need somebody with me. Nancy and I were asking somebody to give food to us and I don't know that I let Nancy say anything. But she was there. Having her there was all I needed. I needed somebody there! Oh, we've asked lots of people for lots of things and got them.

N.C. It's quite incredible!

T.A. Your newsletters emphasize the company's community aspect. I guess your willingness to go out and ask the community for support is a part of this. What are some other aspects of community involvement?

N.C. At least once a year we go to the University and do lectures through the Women's Studies Program. We have done some lectures on the company and on the work that we do. We took a lecture (with slides) about Aphra to a General Studies class; it was really well-received.

A.P. Yes. And in each of our shows that we've done we've always had at least one "dark" night where we try to encourage new voices, whether they be poets, singers, whatever. We like to encourage people who haven't done that much before.

N.C. Our dark nights are primarily, but not necessarily, just women. The men that participate in our dark nights, well . . . aren't women! (Laughter) But they have a different idea of the world. There are men trying to change things as well. Men that are uncomfortable with the set up of how everything is. Men that are very supportive.

A.P. 'Cause they're the only one who feel comfortable working with us! Let's be honest! (Laughter)

N.C. We do have quite a few men who are supportive of our work and work with us regularly.

A.P. Although it's great when we go into our "tech" days. Women, women everywhere! It's great you know.

N.C. Ya! All women teching! We do have a stage manager this time who is a man, but so often its only women moving these big sets!

A.P. And we can do it!

N.C. We build them and anybody who wants to help can. We can teach you real fast how to put a set together.

T.A. I've read in your newsletters that you encourage proposals from the artistic community, offering Maenad's assistance in production. Has this been successful?

A.P. That's what we've done this year. It's a two-tier system. This is the first year we've had an open proposal out for the next season. We kept one slot for ourselves because we are hoping to have a conference, called Breaking The Surface, which will focus on women, theatre and social action. A conference that will not just be panels and lectures, but a very interactive conference between the pros conducting the workshops and the participants.

T.A. That sounds like a theme where you'll get more than just the artistic community participating.

A.P. Yes. Although we do hope that the primary core will be the performances. A lot of conferences tend to be so fixated on the papers and the much more academic side; that's an important side, but not the side we're pushing. The thirst for us is creating work and getting it seen.

N.C. Creative work that has social action as its focus. The creative companies that will be coming to this conference are socially active. The work they do usually moves around social issues.

T.A. Rose Scollard emphasizes the need for a political focus in theatre.

A.P. I think most theatre is political. Even if you look at dinner theatre or the schloppiest farce--it may not be my politics, but there's a politic at work there. It may not be the politics I find very attractive or want to be a part of, but it's definitely there and it's pushing forward a social ideal or a social moral that is there. We've had comments that maybe we're not active enough in our feminism, but our feeling is that basically we're artists firsts and that we're always feminists, so anything we create will have that perspective.

T.A. A female perspective in a male-dominated genre.

A.P. World! A male-dominated world!

N.C. Let alone genre! Ya! So that each thing we do, whether you agree with what our image of the women is or not, is still a work.

A.P. I think some of the problem is, well it's difficult to describe, is that maybe we quite often push at the women rather than the men. The scripts and the ways we look at things are much less "men give us a break" or "Don't you think you've had your time it's our time now" or any of those kinds of things. We're more likely to say "Hey, get out there and do it! And when you do it take the responsibility for it! Know that there are things you're going to have to put up with if you do because it's not easy, and it's always your responsibility!" That can sometimes be hard to take; people feel a little abused by it.

N.C. But we're not an agit-prop company. Our focus is to work with a female consciousness. Our work so far is primarily creating scripts that either Rose and I or Rose, Alex, and I have written. Each one of these is really different. I have a different approach to theatre than Rose.

A.P. We're all very different.

N.C. Writing a play together is a very interesting thing. Pulling all the threads together to make them work into one piece was sometimes quite challenging [with Aphra] because we think in different terms. Next year we have a play that will be a very interactive, developmental piece that deals with the connections between a Metis woman and a Scottish woman growing up. It's called Mother Tongue.

A.P. That's a working title.

N.C. Yes. We're not sure what it will be called. It's going to deal with the similarities that these women experienced growing up: one in a Scottish culture, one in Alberta as a Metis. The other play is going to be Gertrude and Ophelia. A play about Ophelia's motivation in Hamlet. The play takes place between the scenes of Hamlet, between Gertrude and Ophelia. It's a play written by a woman named Margaret Clarke who works up at the University [of Calgary], and it's very interesting.

A.P. They'll be very different; even in the writing process. Margaret's is written; it's a complete script. Although she feels she would like to do some workshop and development of it in the time before it's produced. Cheryl's piece is very process-dominant to begin with. All we wanted to do was have a totally different style. We wanted to try not having a single director but to have different people who came in and worked with us to bring in new inspiration. But basically the final right to decide what happens and what will be present will be mine and Cheryl's. The stage manager will have a much more dynamic part because the stage manager will be our ongoing outside eye. Altogether about ten different people have contributed to the "script."

T.A. Collaboration seems to be an idea that is emphasized in Maenad.

N.C. Yes, it is. We're so much more collaborative than any other theatre that I've encountered. In the last show, Tango Noir/Bete Blanche, Rose described Gerri Hemphill, the woman who directed it, as a facilitator because, in a sense, that's what Gerri does in the process. Instead of saying "No," she said "Yes. O.K. Yes." So that the process was more of a facilitator. That's what we try to do. Of course, you reach a point where things just have to get done, but we still work very collaboratively and we avoid hierarchy. I really think that's the thing that we accomplish. Sometimes collective decision-making isn't accomplished because we don't have time. But rarely. We are non-hierarchical. We do not have a hierarchy. There is not somebody with more status.

A.P. It is a struggle because people are so used to hierarchy that when they come in and there's Rose and Nancy and I they assume that...

T.A. Because you've been around longer, you're the ones in control.

A.P. Yes. They give a hierarchy to us. It can be a hard thing to keep reassuring and ensuring that people are not denying themselves rights. It's a strange position to be put in because you keep on wanting to say "Well I don't want to force you to do something that you don't want to do. People can feel that. You can say well would you like to do such and such? And they say "Ya."

T.A. And they don't really mean "Ya."

A.P. Right. They don't really mean "Ya." They just think, "I really believe in what the company's doing so I'll do it." What we want is for people to have an ongoing process of taking responsibility for saying what it is they want to do and then doing it; coming up with new ideas and then making them happen. It's a hard process, but it's worth it. It's a kind of utopia that we keep working towards and hierarchy can slip in. People force things on you at times and you have to try and say, "No. Let's get back down here and just go from this level."

N.C. There are a lot of local women in theatre here who are beginning to work with us again and again, so that they are very comfortable stepping in and saying what it is they'd like to see. Whether they're necessarily immediately involved in the project that is going on at hand. If you're an actor, for instance, you may do all kinds of things. Your involvement with Maenad would not end with being an actor. That's the way we work. Each year this happens more and more because we have to find the people that are comfortable working in the company as well.

T.A. And comfortable working with new ways of creating theatre.

N.C. Our focus is specifically new works.

A.P. Yes. So part of my project with Cheryl for Mother Tongue is to try and merge the form of performance art and straight contemporary theatre style. So that the people who work with us are going to be performance artists, visual artists, writers, film makers, directors. . . . Every time we produce a play the playwright is involved. We want everybody to be there. We don't want to be a production company that produces your play if you don't feel like you can be a part of it. That's what our mandate is at the moment. We feel that kind of input and that kind of placement of the writer within the company is valid for us.

N.C. I don't have any quibbles about other companies not doing it, that's fine. But for us, that's what we want. We want everybody to have a hand in what is created. I think all of those kinds of energies that people bring add to the production. They really do.

T.A. Your reception within the artistic community seems to be strong. What about your critical reception?

A.P. There are reviews for every show we've ever done. In lots of ways the media has been very supportive in giving us coverage. They do great advance publicity. When you tell them everything to say, they write it down and it comes out wonderfully! You understand and you know what it means. And then they come see the show and--not to slight the reviewers, but . . . It's not that they just don't get *our* stuff--very rarely do they get anybody's stuff. That's because they're journalists. Theatre is not their love. They're not theatre critics. So, lots of times you can feel this desire they have to write about something else.

N.C. We have had reviews from both papers in town [The Calgary Herald and the Calgary Sun] for most of the shows we've ever done. We're also reviewed in Theatrum and NeWest.

T.A. Are there any other theatre companies that you are aware of with a similar focus to Maenad? Other, perhaps, than Nightwood in Toronto?

N.C. I think there are others in Vancouver, but I don't think they're as formally organized.

A.P. I don't know that there's an ongoing company like us.

N.C. There are definitely other women who have gotten together in collectives to do things, but I don't know that they're ongoing companies, and I don't know that there focus is on new work.

T.A. Is there any professional contact between yourselves and Nightwood? A sharing of ideas, or...

A.P. No, not really. it's just so far away from us. In lots of ways that kind of networking takes a lot of time. It's not that it's not worth it. It is. But at the stage we're at it takes all of our energy to make enough money to live on and to do the creative work we want to do. We do feel isolated sometimes out here. Our work doesn't fit a purely feminist mandate because we don't apply all of their doctrine and it doesn't fit the mandate of regular theatre because we're producing new works from a female point of view, which just doesn't fit . . .

T.A. And Canadian!

N.C. Yes, Canadian and new. New! Every time we do a show it's a world premiere. Every time we do something it's brand new! I'll be going to the International Conference of Woman Playwrights and I'll be representing Maenad when I'm there.

T.A. That's in Toronto?

N.C. Yes, in two weeks. So we really hope to make some more connections at that point as well because we are very interested in networking with other companies, and setting up a support network for women that are working in theatre. At this point in time our energies are spent surviving in this town, literally.

A.P. We've been trying to get enough of a name or a foothold so that there's a place in Calgary for our kind of theatre, I think we've successfully achieved that. I don't know how many people in Calgary actually know what Maenad is, if you look proportionately at the population, but I think we've pushed for enough coverage and done enough that any body who has a strong interest in theatre would know our name or have some idea of who we are.

N.C. And now because of that there will be a certain knowledge of us at this conference as well. There may not be a great knowledge of us but it will be much easier to network and do the work that needs to be done when I'm there in terms of making contacts because we have some recognition of the work we've done in the last two years. Rose, Alex, and I have been working steadily for the last two years. We're pretty much workaholics.

T.A. With the incorporation of Maenad Productions Theatre Society in 1989 did the company develop a new direction?

N.C. Our new direction is not to just produce the work that the three of us have made. We received ten submissions in our call for proposals and have had a non-involved jury decide which of the ten submissions to do. So although Alex is a founding member of Maenad, she and Cheryl submitted their piece.

A.P. I wasn't a part of the jury because I knew I wanted to propose something. . . . You see we've removed ourselves; we don't get the guarantee. This is the new direction. The way we started, Maenad would not have existed without Nancy, Rose and Alex. Next year when the season is chosen, there will be a non-involved jury that will go through the proposals and choose three. That's our newest direction and hopefully that will sustain itself and get bigger.

T.A. Is the jury made of members of your Board of Directors?

N.C. No. Artistic people in the community.

A.P. But people who have been involved with Maenad, who have some idea of who we are and what we are and what we're looking to do. When you think of it, each year we've had a slightly different mandate. The first year we had our own plays that we believed in and that we wanted produced. When that year had finished we all got together and asked, "What next? Do we continue?" Early on we decided we just wouldn't be a machine that should go on if there was no impetus or energy to. So we sat down at Rose's table and we talked about what we wanted to gain for ourselves in the next year. Our ambitions were very self-motivated. One of mine was that I finally wanted to come out of the closet as a writer. I'm quite pushy as a director and quite O.K. as an actor. I don't have any problem taking power in those roles, but as a writer I'm quite nervous. Then we talked about different themes we were interested in covering. That's how the season of Gone Tomorrow, Aphra, and Coasting to Brownsville was first put together. Next year the idea is opening up into the community.

T.A. Let's talk a little bit more specifically about your plays. Many of the plays you've produced thus far take a myth and either destroy it or change it, whether it's a modern myth about society's expectations of women as in Tango Noir and Aphra or a classical myth as in Firebird or Thirteenth God. Is myth-changing something you're consciously trying to do?

N.C. Well, yes. We want to reclaim images of women and find out what the truths behind those images are.

A.P. Or to look for another possible truth. There is no one truth.

N.C. We try to say away from one truth.

A.P. We try to stay away from *the* feminine vision and claim *a* feminine vision.

N.C. For Rose and I the deconstructing or reconstructing of myth comes from a fascination with the particular myths. The one that really gets me is the pocket of culture mythology that...

A.P. That I worked on with a Harlequin piece [Forever There].

N.C. Right. And Rose takes some of the classical mythology with Firebird and Thirteenth God and really reconstructs.

A.P. Even in the play you see tonight [Tango Noir/Bete Blanche]. These are women who become myths. Mata Hari and the myth of the femme fatale. Colette and her whole lifestyle.

N.C. Often there's a real destructive quality to some of these myths. At times, not always. I think the Colette piece is a really empowering piece. I think that Colette, through examining the archetypes in her dream, finds power in herself. Maybe not finds it, but reaffirms it, because she always had power in her life. We try and find all sides. Sometimes when we deal with the destructive aspects of myth people want us to deal with the affirmatives. With Aphra Behn, we made her a bit of an icon. As opposed to having her lost in--

A.P. We really didn't want her to be a victim. In some ways in the script you can see she is victimized by her times, by other women, by lots of other things.

N.C. Censorship, omission--

A.P. But she's not a victim. Never! Of any of the things that drew me to Aphra it was her sense of power--

N.C. Her joy for life!

A.P. Her vivacity!

N.C. It's amazing. She was just so unique in that sense. She wasn't a bitter woman. She just went on and on.

A.P. She was sarcastic and feisty!

N.C. Her work was really strong and celebratory. She worked within a really traditional context, but she was always subverting the traditional play through her political ideas. That has a lot to do with why so many of us don't know who she is today. She was definitely subverting this traditional form she was working in. That's what we tried to do in the play. From the response we got from the audience, we did succeed in that. We reminded them that we have heroines, heros, whatever you want to call them--we have them. Women have them. Often they're not written about so we can forget that we have them. . . . We got very impassioned about her as we worked on the project.

T.A. Universities are taking a similar focus. We are now "digging up" women's work has been buried for so long. Instead of remaining content with the male canon of literature, people are saying, "Hey this woman was writing then too." That's how I heard about Behn; I'd never heard of her in my undergraduate English courses.

A.P. I know. It's ridiculous.

N.C. Alex has a BFA in theatre.

A.P. I studied in Britain first and finished my degree at U.of C.

N.C. Rose has a BA in English from the U. of T. I have a diploma in Theatre Arts. But when we sat around the table and said "Let's do this piece on Aphra and let's write it together", all we had to start with was my memory of a history teacher who said: "There was in Restoration England a woman playwright. Her name was Aphra Behn. She was the first woman writer." This woman had a huge volume of work, more than any of the men who were writing at the time. Or most of the men. And her work is easily as good!

A.P. She has seventeen plays that are credited as hers and twenty-one that may be hers. That's not including her songs. Her songs were acclaimed. Her plays weren't always acclaimed by the critics of the day, but her songs seemed to have been very, very well received. Her poems, her translations. She had a huge, huge amount of work. It's amazing to think it could be so readily forgotten!

N.C. That was the theme through the play. That struggle against the silence of censorship after you've gone. While she was alive she was able to fight and be heard, but after she was dead...

A.P. They literally buried her.

N.C. Of course, she's being unearthed and excavated in this century, and that's really exciting. But that's 300 years!

A.P. Some of the critics give scathing reviews of Aphra Behn's work. Then you realize they haven't read them because they're so disgustingly lewd that a woman shouldn't write it. And you've just read a whole review of it! and you say, "Hey this sounds like some people I know!" (Laughter)

T.A. Do you feel your position as a "little theatre" significantly influences your work?

N.C. Maybe it was just the right time, but it seems to me that we were the beginning of a groundswell in Calgary for small companies coming up and saying we can do our own thing. The New Century Stage. The Underground Glee Club. Screaming Fish. The Color Correction Theatre. There are all kinds of small companies that are banding together and creating stuff. They don't feel they have to wait. . . . I think small theatres make up the spine of what goes on. We are always developing talent. We're not just developing our own talent, but other talent is developing through us. Talent leaves us and goes to other places. As long as small companies keep going, then we have developed a backbone. People are given the opportunity not to wait for the huge, bureaucratic companies to notice them. We have empowered ourselves. It's a really important thing that we've done through Maenad. We have made our name known because we got off our butts and said . . .

A.P. "We can do it!!"

N.C. You can also say that we have had so much support--Theatre Calgary, ATP [Alberta Theatre Project], One Yellow Rabbit.

A.P. Every single theatre company in town has given us space to rehearse.

N.C. We get most of our sets from ATP and Theatre Calgary. They're perfectly happy with us doing that. They do advertising for us in their programs and it is their support that gives the media the idea that we are a professional company.

A.P. You shouldn't feel like you have to have permission to do something. You don't need that permission. You have to take it yourself and say, "Why do I think someone else is going to create the kind of theatre I want?" It's so stupid. So, you do it yourself.

N.C. The concept of developing a feminine consciousness in theatre--a really female consciousness in theatre--don't wait! You'll wait a long time. Start making it yourself and then "they" will listen.

Appendix B

Interview with Rose Scollard

July 1993

T.A. Where did you grow up? Were there any early influences in your life that led to a writing career?

R.S. I was an immigrant. I came from Ireland when I was nine in 1948. All my life I wanted to be a writer and my parents supported this; so I was encouraged. But I never really got off the ground with it until I was about 45. I'm a very late-in-life writer.

T.A. When you came from Ireland did you move to Toronto? I know that's where you went to university.

R.S. No, Windsor area and we lived in the country, a rural existence. I walked a couple mile to school every day--that kind of thing.

T.A. When you went to the University of Toronto to get your honors degree in English, did you take any formal writing courses?

R.S. I took one small writing course in my fourth year. It was offered as an option, but this was 1961-65 and there was very little in the way of creative writing courses. I went to University College. I think some of the other colleges were a little bit more focused on it [writing] but certainly I didn't seem to find very much. There were a few magazines, you know, and I did have a few things published in them. I had two plays produced at university.

T.A. Part of your career previous to writing was in publication.

R.S. Yes. I was a teacher before university. I went to Teacher's College. Then after university I worked for Ryerson Press doing educational texts.

T.A. When did you move to Calgary?

R.S. In 1973. My husband was hired by McClelland Stuart, and when they opened a Western office, we came out here together.

T.A. Your first play after your university productions were the three short companion pieces Uneasy Pieces. Did your association with Maenad grow out of the Edmonton Fringe and Theatre Network stagings of these plays?

R.S. In 1984, I took a workshop with Theatre Calgary with Gordon Peugilly and that's where I wrote Uneasy Pieces. I won a couple of

Alberta Culture prizes with those plays. At the same time Theatre Calgary was giving an actor's workshop. Gordon was very keen on playwrights and actor's getting together and having their stuff read so we did a bit of that. After the workshops were over Barbara Campbell-Brown and I formed a group called Off The Page. We met very sporadically. Sometimes several times a month, sometimes just one time a month, for a couple of years. We read and wrote things. Off and on there were about 30-40 different people connected in one way or another over that couple of years. Sometimes it would only be two of us meeting and sometimes 10 or 20. It was a very active little group. It was really good for me, very supportive, lots of discussion of what we wrote. Out of that with Barbara, Alexandria [Patience], Sandra MacNeill, and Dawn Davies we formed Maenad to take a play to the Edmonton Fringe.

T.A. Did Off The Page continue?

R.S. It continued for a few years, but it petered out. All of those groups have a very short life span. So we formed Maenad unofficially. Shortly afterwards Dawn, Sandra and Barbara left the group, but we produced a second fringe play, Tango Noir. At that time Alexandria was directing another play called The Waitresses by Nancy Cullen. It was called an Uncle Gordon Production because her Uncle Gordon had given her the money to produce it. That was being staged at the Fringe at the same time and at that time we melded. So Nancy, Alexandria and I became the next group, joined by Brenda Anderson who directed Tango Noir and the next play Thirteenth God. So the four of us incorporated as a theatre company and as a non-profit society and that's how Maenad got started. The real story!

T.A. Once you became involved in Maenad did you find there was a change in the way you wrote?

R.S. Not really. My early work was quite feminist and it suited Maenad.

T.A. What about the process of writing? Before Maenad you wrote independently and during your involvement you worked collectively.

R.S. Yes. Uneasy Pieces was entirely my work. That was produced by Theatre Network [in Edmonton]. But with Maenad I am still basically a solitary writer. Gone Tomorrow was my first collaboration, but we wrote separately. We knew we wanted to write monologues for women. It turned out that Nancy [Cullen] wrote two and I wrote one. They were very connected in theme and it was interesting to see how they fit together as a group of plays. Then Aphra was our first real collaboration. Nancy, Alexandria, and I met and discussed things and decided what we wanted to do the play. That was a much more difficult process and very time consuming. Unless you have a certain schema worked out for writing in that way it's extremely time consuming trying to suit everybody's work drives. Everybody has a different way of working. I found it quite difficult and I don't think I'd like to do it again unless I'd be funded. So that I could take the time. One person would have time and the others wouldn't. It's very hard to bring three lives together. The time it takes to create a play.

T.A. The time spent on collaborative work sounds taxing, but it seems to have paid off with Aphra.

R.S. It worked very well with Aphra. Partly because we were incredibly stimulated; it just seemed to work.

T.A. Have you continued your independent work since Aphra?

R.S. I wrote Bete Blanche during that time and it was produced shortly after. That's the only Maenad piece I've done independently. I've written a lot of CBC things. I find that it's interesting that with CBC I started out with quite oddball, feminist, science fictiony sorts of things and gradually it's evolved into much more commercial things. I find it's going in a commercial way. I did a Lunchbox Theatre play last year that was definitely commercial. I haven't really focused on something that's just coming out of me and not a commission. This is commissioned work so there's always input and expectations from those who grant the commission.

T.A. Do your more commercial pieces maintain strong roles for women? Is the commercialism in the structure or the characterization?

R.S. Yes, I think they have strong roles for women. In the Lunchbox play, Murder in Mount Royal, there were three women and one man and the women really carried the action. It is about twin sisters who are slightly crazy and murderous. (Laughter) I would say that my CBC stuff is quite strong for women. Currently I'm writing a series of mysteries and they feature a middle age detective and her side kick who is the same. I feel quite good about that. They're both fortyish and it's quite lively and fun. I'm really enjoying that. In some ways I don't think of myself as a feminist writer but with Maenad I certainly produced things that were much closer to my heart than these other things which I really enjoy but it's not that purely creative exploration.

T.A. Although you don't consider yourself a feminist playwright, does Maenad consider itself a feminist theatre company? In the seasonal newsletters they refer to themselves as female centred, feminine, exploring female vision, but they never use the term feminist.

R.S. We are feminist. And it's impossible to avoid that term. The main reason we avoid it in our promotion material is that we don't want to limit ourselves to any agenda. We don't want to say, "This is what feminism is and we're going to write that." We want to include all women's views and I think we've done a good job of that. That was our main reason for resisting the term feminist. We have a very wide set of standards and we mainly want to promote women's voices in whatever way they want to be explored and we want to promote strong roles for women. I think we've succeeded in these two aspects.

T.A. When I interviewed Nancy and Alexandria two years ago, Alexandria said that the company was criticized by some groups for not being feminist enough. Does this criticism still exist?

R.S. I don't think so. The press considers us feminist simply because we are women centred. And the criticism that Alexandria was talking to comes from a group that has changed its nature. So I don't think so. Everybody's concerned with a broader viewpoint.

T.A. The Maenad involvement with the Breaking the Surface conference may have alleviated any doubts that existed in academic circles.

R.S. Yes. We're very attractive to academics. But what the conference did was reinforce some doubts. We always felt that we hadn't opened ourselves to women of color. At the conference we were criticized for it. I felt very badly about that. But I still think it did galvanize us to try to work some of that out. I think we've addressed it. It certainly wasn't through not wanting to. It was the usual sin of omission. I feel that we are now coming from a much broader base than we were, which was always our intention. One of the things that has happened is that we are promoting a wider range of women. Not just ourselves. We started out with our own work partially due to our frustration that we weren't being produced and partly because if you're going to put eight hours a day into something it's naturally going to be your own work. But now we have mechanisms in place that make it much simpler to include other people.

T.A. I know in your first call for proposals ten people responded. Has that number increased?

R.S. It may have increased slightly. This time I was not really party to it so I don't know how many have come in.

T.A. So what is your involvement right now. Are you weaning yourself away in order to concentrate on your independent work?

R.S. I still do a lot of volunteering. I did a lot of the publicity last year and I intend to do it again this year. I really find it impossible to write if I'm connected with the board. I find it distracts me emotionally and I'm really not very good at it. I always feel like I'm spending a lot of time but not really being useful. So I have weaned myself. I no longer spend eight hours a day on it anymore. What I contribute is controlled. I still do put in a lot of hours but they're controlled hours. I know when I have to do them. Even so it can take you by surprise. You find all of a sudden another week has gone. I find that really difficult, especially since I'm starting to get more work, more commissions. Emotionally I'm still really attached to it and next year I hope to get a play produced by Maenad.

T.A. Is your personal writing program very disciplined?

R.S. I try to treat it like a job, not always successfully. Some months are better than others.

T.A. I know you've written some fiction as well as your drama. Joanna Glass, a Saskatchewan playwright, also writes both. She finds fiction an easier genre to write. Do you agree?

R.S. I write a few short stories but I find fiction extremely difficult. It doesn't suit my nature or my perceptions. I find drama writing easier. Not that it's easy, but I feel more confident with it.

T.A. Another aspect of Glass's work that is comparable to yours is her emphasis on humor. She insists that her plays deal with women because she's writing as a woman, not because she has made a political choice. Rather she believes theatre should be entertaining and funny. Could you comment on the role of humor in your work?

R.S. I also believe that your first duty is to entertain. I don't choose a theme and write about it. I start with an image of some kind of little gem or a phrase or a little scene and go from there. Out of that comes my theme. The more time I have and the less influence from outside make a better play. Usually a more feminine theme means I'm getting down to what I'm really thinking about. Humor is really important too. But here again I don't set to write humorously, it just comes out of the subject matter sometimes.

T.A. Maenad is becoming more popular and audiences are increasing. Do you think the Joyce Doolittle space will be abandoned and they will look for something bigger?

R.S. It would be nice to see that happen. Theatre space is very poor in Calgary. I don't know what it's like in Edmonton. We have the Joyce Doolittle and the Victor Mitchell and it's such a big jump in size from 60 to 300 that unless we were really certain [of a large audience] it wouldn't happen. But I can't think of a good 150 seat theatre that we could afford.

T.A. Have you done any directing?

R.S. I can't really say I have. I may have co-directed Aphra but really Alexandria did it. It's always been at the back of my mind that I'd like to direct, but although I have some insights it doesn't come naturally to me. To direct you have to have this comprehensive view plus an executive ability- both of which I'm not very good at.

T.A. The Calgary press has provided consistent coverage of Maenad productions. Do you read the reviews? How do they effect your writing?

R.S. Well . . . let me see . . . I read something once about a playwright who trained her children to throw stones at the reviewers. (Laughter) I was totally in favor of that! We're very fortunate in that both papers [The Calgary Herald and the Calgary Sun] treat us like a professional theatre company when actually we're not. We don't qualify. But we always get a pre-show article and we nearly always get reviewed- badly or viciously usually. I don't know what it is. It's interesting. It's my opinion that a reviewer has a certain duty to educate the public as to the kind of theatre they will be seeing. But their duty as they see it is to sell newspapers, I suppose. So I don't think we've had kind reviews. How they affect my writing? They must affect me to a certain extent, I definitely react to them and I can't resist reading them. But ultimately I put it behind me.

T.A. So you don't find reviews constructive?

R.S. Very seldom. Quite often I find they are reviewing the play that they wish I'd written or that they might have written. They come with a certain set of expectations; especially since I'm a feminist, they really want me to write feminist plays from their point of view. They want me to address a feminist issue as they see it--say abortion, or wife battering. I feel a lot of my themes are about creative freedom and finding a voice--that is a feminist issue too but it has never been noticed in a review. By a reviewer I mean the main newspapers. Occasionally I get a review (like from Diane [Bessai] or Joyce [Doolittle]) which is not in a newspaper. Diane reviewed my first production of Uneasy Pieces. I really got vicious reviews on that! It was my first play and I *saw* the reviewers sitting in an audience where everybody was laughing hysterically for two hours and yet I was . . . chopped. Diane reviewed it a couple of months later in NeWest. It wasn't entirely favorable, but it was a very constructive review and she treated me as a writer. She treated all my themes as serious themes. The title of it was "Women and Mythology" or that sort of thing [actually "Women and Witchery"] and it made me feel good. It made me feel that I actually existed, that someone was listening to what I was saying. Usually the NeWest or Theatrum reviews, whether good or bad, provide criticism as I see it. They are not tossed off 20 minutes after seeing the play.

T.A. Do you feel there is a difference in the response you receive from male or female reviewers?

R.S. Well, the two times when we had Kate [Lushington] instead of Martin [Morrow] we had glowing reviews. Absolutely glowing! But then again in the Sun the only time I got a good review was a male reviewer, so . . . (Laughter) I don't think you can draw any conclusions. But I do think that the two main reviewers in Calgary generally don't care for us. Kate, who has an interest in alternative theatre and dance, knows what we're about so she's more enthusiastic. But I don't think it's male/female.

T.A. In my thesis I focus on the changing representations of female characters in plays by prairie playwrights. Bete Blanche and to some extent Gone Tomorrow are the only plays where a prairie setting seems important. Do you feel the prairie setting influences your plays in any way?

R.S. I came late to the prairies and I felt an immediate bond with the landscape. I would never go back East. David and I used to go out driving, seldom to the mountains, always to the southwest or the northeast. We loved, *we loved* the prairie landscape! And we still do! I think it's wonderful! I also came to work for McClelland and Stuart; the job we had to do with the Glenbow region put me in touch with a lot of prairie writing and prairie pioneer stuff. I was just blown away by the whole thing and I still feel that way about the West! I just love it! I feel like a westerner! I wish my parents had emigrated here instead of Windsor. (Laughter) So I feel that it's there and I feel it's a strong influence. But because a lot of what I write is psychological and almost like sci-fi kind of stuff it doesn't always come through. I think it was very strong in Bete Blanche, and Gone Tomorrow was specifically set in Calgary. I felt very located in Calgary in Gone Tomorrow. A lot of my radio stuff is very western. For example, Love and War Western Style is set in the late 40's and it's about these crazy people who do crazy things. I found when I read the pioneer stuff it was very humorous. They dealt with their problems with humor. Generally very cheerful. When you live in the East you think the West is Depression, dustbowl. When you come out here you see that people who lived in that time didn't see it that way. They were really very optimistic even when times were rough. There's a mental space in the West that we don't have in the East. More things have been possible to me here than there was in the East. The teaching I did here was in an experimental school that was really quite open. The work I'm doing is getting more interesting, more exciting.

T.A. I was excited to hear Maenad had established their own press to publish their productions. Has this endeavor proven successful, will it continue?

R.S. I haven't really been party to that so I don't really know. I think this is a dream of Alex's [Alexandria Patience], even though I'm the one with the publishing background. There's a feminist theatre in England that produces their plays as programs. So the program is the play with the program information in it. She's quite turned on by that so they might try and do that sometime.

T.A. That really fits with the philosophy of "doing" that Nancy and Alexandria have told me about. "If we don't do it, nobody else is going to do it." Let's focus for a minute now on a few of your plays. Could you comment on the use of myth in The Hero. Is the play based on a classical myth or is it your own creation?

R.S. I think the idea is mine. I've been reading a lot of Robert Graves who, if not a feminist, is influenced by the women in his life. It definitely made me very aware of the goddess based myth. So I steeped in him and I somehow came away with the idea that dragons were female. I hadn't really thought of it that way before. In The Fairie Queene, for example, the dragon is a female and she spawns horrible children and so on. It then occurred to me that when the hero was rescuing the damsel and killing the dragon that he was somehow killing all those parts of her that weren't the damsel. I think that idea was my own. The hero killing the other parts of women. The hero not necessarily as man, but as society creating this damsel. And that's where I'm coming from and that's very strong in the poem.

T.A. How does the poem work in the play? Is it accompanied by music?

R.S. Yes. They shortened it of course. I fought against this. It was workshopped in Banff. The people in Banff absolutely hated it! They just couldn't say enough bad things about the play. I think that kind of destroyed his confidence in the poem part. I said I didn't want it cut. When I finally went to the production it was cut; they just couldn't handle it all. Looking back, I see it is rather strident in places, but I still think the idea that women separate themselves, that they suppress all these things that might make them look ugly- by swearing, or dressing casually, or loosely- there's so much that's knocked out of you as a woman by society that somehow you have to reclaim all that. When you reclaim, as I did in the play, it comes across as being very strident and I think that's what bothered them in Banff. That's what I was saying we have to do. We have to bring all those parts back to us no matter how ugly or stupid or whatever. Whatever we look like we have to incorporate ourselves before we can be a whole person. Those pressures were very strong in the early part of my life.

T.A. At the end of the play though the 'hero' does win and there is no reclamation.

R.S. He does. But in a sense she's chosen that destiny for herself and I think it is clear in the play that it's her fault as much as the hero's. He has a role to play and he plays it. So, it's a negative play. It's a play that says it's very hard for women to go through with this and in the play Nicola doesn't go through with it.

T.A. No. She tries to, but the change is too great.

R.S. I think it's often perceived as a male-bashing play and it isn't really. It's a play saying to women, "Look, this can happen to you!"

T.A. I didn't see it as male bashing, but I wished she had been able to change. Perhaps Mallory was fulfilling a role, but the hope that his role would be defeated is unfulfilled.

R.S. Yes, but that's the resolution that happened at that time in my life writing that play. It probably is very much a play of someone of my generation; for younger people it might be different.

T.A. Could you comment on the chronological structure of the play? How does it tie in with the mythical ideas?

R.S. With my first plays I didn't have a very sophisticated idea of dramatic structure. I certainly have a much clearer idea of structure now, but I don't know if I'm writing any better. It's very interesting that you can know how things work but that does not necessarily mean you're a better writer. The nice thing about Maenad is that no one in Maenad would have ever cut that poem. I feel very strongly for all playwrights that the workshopping process can be very damaging because what they want to do is remove your warts and make you more acceptable and actually the warts contain the germ of what you can become. I think that they can destroy a lot of writing in workshop if they're not careful.

T.A. If they are workshopping with the intent of creating a mainstage production, they will want to make it more conservative to interest a usually more conservative audience.

R.S. Yes. With Maenad there really is the opportunity to go with it. That's the one thing I really like about Alexandria as a director. She says, "Let's make the play work before we re-write." She looks at the play to see what's there and what can come out of it. She doesn't come in with a strong idea of how a play should be and that this won't work because it doesn't fit the rules of dramatic structure.

T.A. She allows a work to be experimental.

R.S. Yes.

T.A. Aphra and Tango Noir both re-present the lives of historical figures. What influenced your writing of these plays.

R.S. I remember reading a story by Alice Munro. She'd written something about an historical figure and she considered that she'd retrieved her one person from the dust heap. I think there's a bit of that in all of us--we want to do a little retrieving of these people. In doing so we find out that there is a continuous line there even though it's been rubbed out in places. So that impulse is there. It was fascinating to see how many plays Aphra wrote and how good she was. There was no reason for her to be wiped out. She was silenced and consequently the woman's voice in theatre was silenced for a long time and that's too bad. With Tango Noire I think I just started with the image of Mata Hari. I thought she was interesting. It was exploring her history and getting caught on to Colette's history and how they came together at one small moment. I think it was a theme that was very important for me at the time--daring to be ugly, daring to step out of the role's that society created for you and be your own person. Both Colette and Mata Hari were that. Colette was a wonderful writer and a fully formed woman, but she was also a bit of a monster. Her 17 year old step son was her lover for many years when she was in her fifties. She wasn't nice, but she went through many transformations in her life when she was reclaiming herself.

T.A. Aphra consists of many short, interwoven scenes. Did this come out of the collaborative nature of the play?

R.S. I find that kind of structure very interesting, but while we were doing it I certainly didn't understand it as well as I wanted to. I'd like to do more of it because it's so interesting. The structure for Aphra was partially dictated by the fact we wanted to include some of Aphra's work and it was partly dictated by the fact that we didn't want to make up too much about her; we didn't want to deviate too much from the little truth we had. So we presented the entire first act as a sort of dream/fantasy/delirium because she was sick. This allowed us to address the different little myths and snippets of information that had grown up about her. But we presented it in a bizarre fashion.

T.A. There's just so much to include that I don't think you could have done it in a linear fashion. Was the unusual structure a conscious reaction to the supposed "male" theatrical structure which is much more conservative?

R.S. I don't entirely agree with that "male-writer" thing. I think it's too easy. I think that what women are doing is not so much rejecting the climactic structure, which I find interesting. You can't dismiss it. But what I think is that it excludes other ways that women are bringing in. I don't think you need to reject the other to bring certain things in. I don't think one way is better than the other and, as you say, certain forms suit certain themes. With Aphra it suited it very well, and with Tango Noir. Bete[Blanche] has a more climactic structure.

T.A. Could you comment on the use of masks as representational tools in the plays.

R.S. I don't consciously plan to use masks. But definitely I find masks really fascinating. I worked with a group of mask makers here a couple of years ago that the group Alex works with now, called Mask Works, grew out of. It's a lot of looking at masks and exploring; they have created a lot of masks. But I think masks are really interesting on stage. In The Hero they serve a very symbolic purpose. They represent what isn't there, what's been separated. In Aphra they give the feeling that these are symbolic and eternal figures that we still have with us. The other mask is purely disguise.

T.A. What does Maenad mean to you outside of the definition that is included on programs and in newsletters?

R.S. It means two things. First of all, we think of theatre as a male tradition that has happened from Dionyses onward, yet his followers were women. Western theatre is supposed to have sprung from the dithyramb which was their song of worship to Dionyses. And they danced and sang so I really think that they started the Western tradition of theatre. So, that's very strong in my mind. They represent for me that recognition that I suddenly had that things weren't always so, that there were other orders and other arrangements of society. When people started talking about changing our language- he/she- it seemed very clumsy to me. What was wrong with using man to represent mankind? I blush to say this now but I focused on the ridiculous side of it. Then I read Robert Graves and Hawkes, who had written some books on Crete. I had studied art history in university quite extensively and I had studied Crete and I had no idea when I was studying that it was a matriarchy and that possibly a lot of these designs and wall paintings had been created by women, ordered by women, that the whole visual art thing had been directed by women. Some how I had missed that in taking a whole year! After reading Hawkes and Graves I looked for other books and I saw why. Because with the old form of writing using man, he, and mankind to describe the images of the goddesses you would never have known that a matriarchy or goddess society had existed. They weren't really trying to hide it; it was just the way language was used. It was such a shock to me and I had an insight into why our use of language had to change. Maenad represents that change in perception for me. Possibly a younger woman wouldn't go through that shock of the situation because you're starting out with it. I can go back and read a book now, for example, Colin Wilcox's The Outsider and it's unreadable simply because it's so male focused. It's just unreadable! Yet that was the kind of book I used to be fascinated by. So I still have a lot of those conflicts and oddities in my experience. I'm 54 so I've got those things. So Maenad represents a break through for me a part form the idea of breaking free and dancing yourself into existence.

T.A. So does this breaking free suggest that drama is the forum through which you discovered your "voice"?

R.S. Yes. I think the entire process beginning with the workshop at Theatre Calgary until now has changed my life. My husband will say it has. It's empowered me. It's such a corny word to use but it definitely is a process and it is a process that has happened to me. I wish it had happened 30 years ago. I don't regret my life or anything; it's very exciting that it's happened to me now. I've come out of it with a much different attitude to everything. It's given me all sorts of insights both into my own nature--what I can do and can't do--and into small theatres. But also more sympathetic to large theatres just because it's so hard to produce a play. It's crippling! Whether you're funded or not funded or whether you're big or you're little--everybody's tied down by it.

T.A. Are there any last comments you have about Maenad?

R.S. My involvement with Maenad has changed me and I would like to see it as a place where women could come in and experience that kind of change. It disturbs me that doesn't happen more. I have this dualism about how involved I should be. Do I go in and make it happen or is there some way we can arrange it so that its people come in and have it happen for themselves?